



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

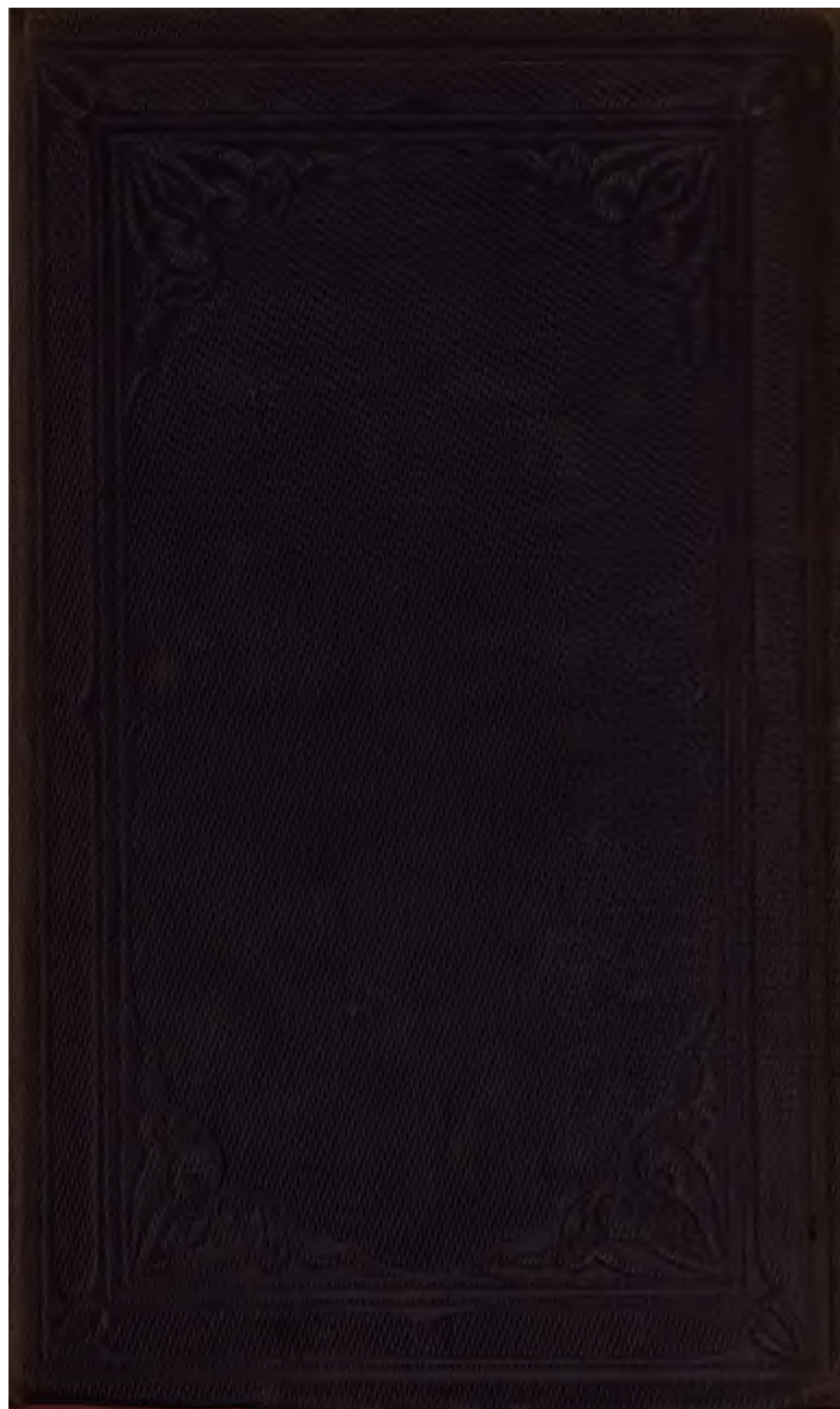
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

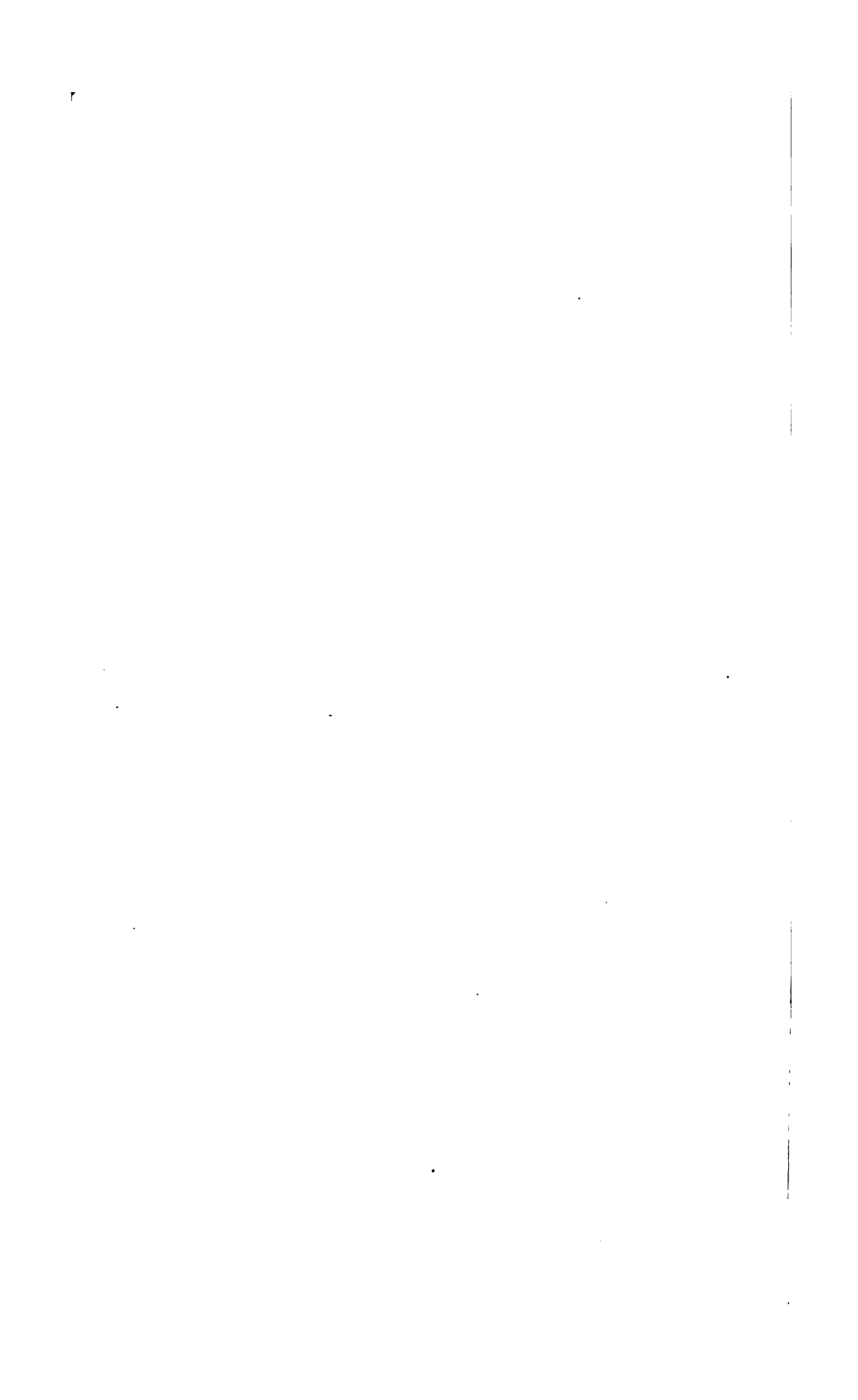
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

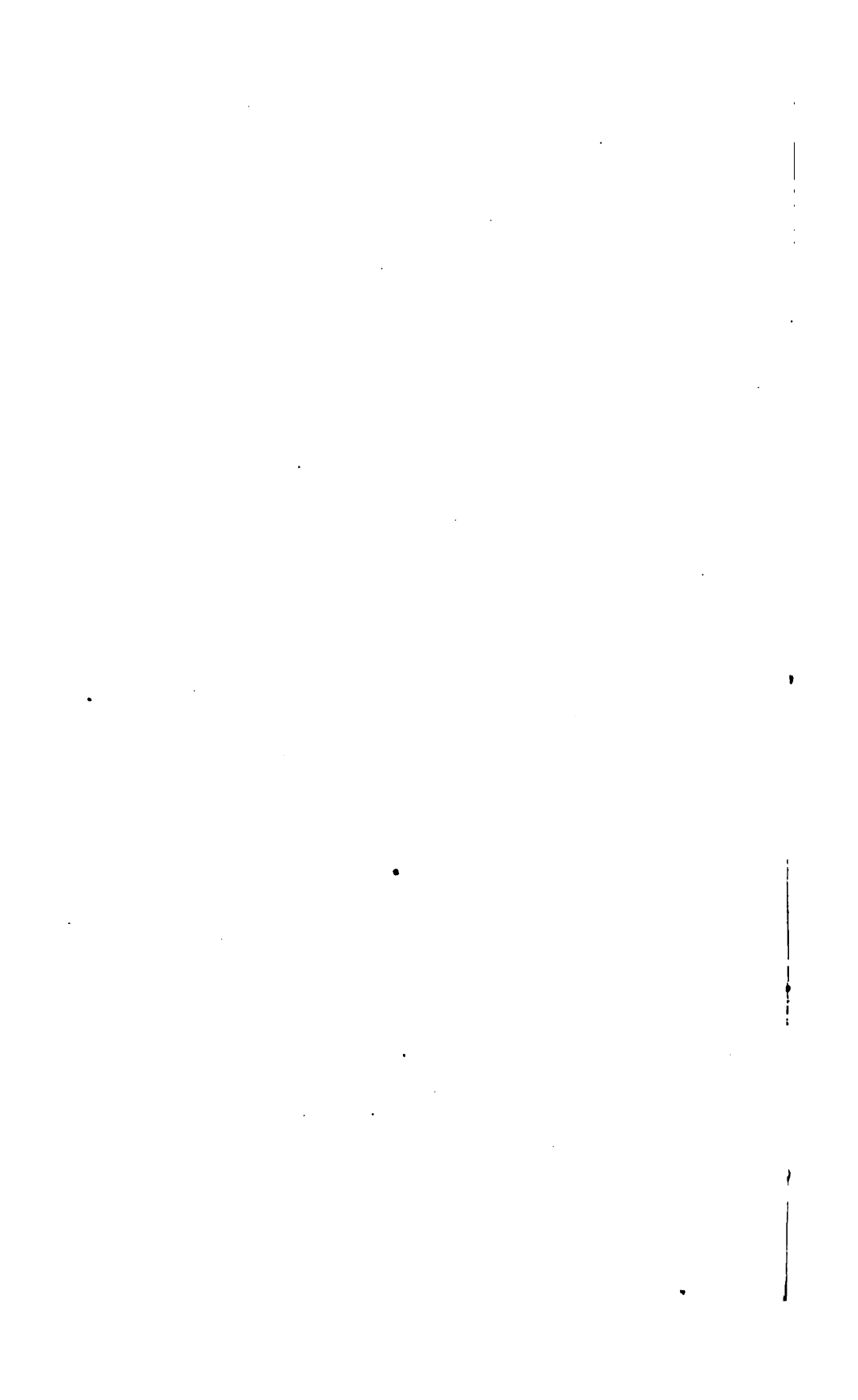








MEDITATIONES HEBRAICÆ.



MEDITATIONES HEBRAICÆ:
OR,
A Doctrinal and Practical Exposition
OF
THE EPISTLE OF
ST. PAUL TO THE HEBREWS,
IN A SERIES OF LECTURES.

BY WILLIAM TAIT, M.A.,
Late Incumbent of Holy Trinity Church, Wakefield; now of St. Matthew's, Rugby.

Tenuēs grandia conamur.

NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.;
WERTHEIM AND MACINTOSH.

MDCCCLV.

100. y. 259

JOHN STANFIELD, PRINTER, WAKEFIELD.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

PART I.—SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO PROPHETS AND ANGELS.

LECTURE I.—Cap. i. 1—3.

	PAGE.
Jesus the Son of God is more exalted and more excellent than Prophets	1

LECTURE II.—Cap. i. 4—7.

Jesus is more exalted than Angels.....	14
--	----

LECTURE III.—Cap. i. 8, 9.

Same subject continued. Jesus has the pre-eminence in moral and spiritual character as much as in native dignity.....	25
--	----

LECTURE IV.—Cap. i. 10—12.

Jesus is Jehovah, the Creator and Upholder of all things. He shall also change them by his word.....	37
---	----

LECTURE V.—Cap. i. 13, 14.

Jesus sits as Lord at the right hand of his Father. Angels stand before him and minister to his people.....	47
--	----

LECTURE VI.—Cap. ii. 1—3.

We ought on this account to hearken to Christ, and shall not escape, if we refuse	59
--	----

LECTURE VII.—Cap. ii. 3.

The gospel was first spoken by Christ himself, and has been confirmed by those who heard him.....	71
--	----

LECTURE VIII.—Cap. ii. 4.

It has been confirmed also by the miraculous signs of the Father and the Holy Ghost.....	83
---	----

LECTURE IX.—Cap. ii. 5—9.		PAGE.
Greatness of the salvation of the Gospel. Inconceivable height of glory to which man has been raised in Christ, and to which Christ will raise his people.....	95	
LECTURE X.—Cap. ii. 10.		
It became Jesus, as the Captain of his people's salvation, to pass to this glory through suffering	107	
LECTURE XI.—Cap. ii. 11, 12.		
This necessity is further demonstrated. Jesus himself acknowledges his people as brethren.....	120	
LECTURE XII.—Cap. ii. 13—15.		
It is demonstrated yet more fully; he acknowledges them as children also. And it was necessary for their redemption, that he should assume their flesh and die.....	133	
LECTURE XIII.—Cap. ii. 16—18.		
The subject is concluded. That Jesus might comfort his people in sorrow, and succour them under temptation, it was needful that he should have experimental acquaintance with both.....	148	
PART II.—SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO MOSES.		
LECTURE I.—Cap. iii. 1—6.		
Christ is to be <i>considered</i> in the character of Apostle and High Priest. As Apostle, he is better than Moses, because he is the builder and Lord of the House of God, whereas Moses was but a servant in it.....	161	
LECTURE II.—Cap. iii. 6.		
The House of God is his believing people.....	174	
LECTURE III.—Cap. iii. 7—11.		
The sin and catastrophe of that generation of Israel whom Moses was appointed to lead to Canaan, ought to be a warning to us.	186	
LECTURE IV.—Cap. iii. 12—14.		
We ought to take heed of their hard and unbelieving heart, and make diligent use of the means of grace.....	199	
LECTURE V.—Cap. iii. 15—19.		
We ought to remember that <i>all</i> that generation provoked God by unbelief, and that they were shut out of the promised land in consequence, and fell in the wilderness.....	212	

LECTURE VI.—Cap. iv. 1, 2.

	PAGE.
We ought to dread the same catastrophe, for we are in the same circumstances, having the promise of entering into the rest of God ..	225

LECTURE VII.—Cap. iv. 3–10.

This rest of God is not that of Creation, nor that into which Joshua introduced Israel, but the present and eternal rest of the Redeemer.....	237
---	-----

LECTURE VIII.—Cap. iv. 11–13.

We ought to labour to enter into it, remembering the awful threatenings of God against unbelief. We ought to take heed also of a mere profession of faith, remembering the omniscience of the Saviour..	250
---	-----

PART III.—SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO AARON AND HIS SONS.

LECTURE I.—Cap. iv. 14–16.

Jesus the Son of God intercedes with the Father on our behalf. He is also the Son of Man, and was tempted in all points like as we are. This twofold consideration of him is full of most blessed encouragement ..	262
--	-----

LECTURE II.—Cap. v. 1–4.

Every human HighPriest mediates between God and man. He is compassed with the infirmity of those for whom he mediates. He is also called of God ..	276
--	-----

LECTURE III.—Cap. v. 5–10.

These three things meet in Christ. He was called of God to the Priestly Office; he was compassed with our infirmity in the days of his flesh; he is the author of eternal life to us by his prevalent mediation above ..	290
--	-----

LECTURE IV.—Cap. v. 11–14.; vi. 1–3. (Digression.)

Principles of the Christian faith are stated. The Hebrews are blamed for not advancing beyond them.....	308
---	-----

LECTURE V.—Cap. vi. 4–8. (Digression continued.)

Those who stand still are in danger of apostacy. The apostate's dreadful doom is declared ..	322
--	-----

LECTURE VI.—Cap. vi. 9—12. (Digression continued.)		PAGE.
Love is the preservative against apostacy. The Hebrews are commended for their love, and are urged to seek after the full assurance of hope	337	
LECTURE VII.—Cap. vi. 13—20. (Digression concluded.)		
God's promises are the ground of hope. They are ratified by his oath, and their fulfilment is secured by the intercession of Christ	350	
LECTURE VIII.—Cap. vi. 20.; vii. 1—10.		
Christ is High-Priest after the order of Melchizedec. Melchizedec was superior to Abraham and to Levi, of whom Aaron came. Christ is therefore Aaron's superior.....	365	
LECTURE IX.—Cap. vii. 11—22.		
The priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron. It was brought in to supersede it, and the greater supersedes the less. It is also eternal; and it is established by the oath of God.....	380	
LECTURE X.—Cap. vii. 23—28.		
Christ's priesthood is untransferable: he is also qualified by his perfect holiness, to minister in the presence of the Father.....	395	
LECTURE XI.—Cap. viii. 1—6.		
Christ's ministrations are declared to us. Sitting with the Father on his throne, he presents the blood of his perfect sacrifice, and the gifts and services of his people.....	411	
LECTURE XII.—Cap. viii. 7—13.		
This ministration is the guarantee of the promises of the "better covenant." The words of Jeremiah are cited to prove that such a covenant was to come into existence	427	
LECTURE XIII.—Cap. ix. 1—8.		
The legal covenant may not be despised. Its ordinances of Divine service and worldly sanctuary shadowed forth spiritual and heavenly realities	443	
LECTURE XIV.—Cap. ix. 9—14.		
Jewish figures are now superseded by the realities which they shadowed forth. The efficacy of the blood of Christ to purge the conscience, is argued from the efficacy of the legal sacrifices to cleanse the flesh.....	460	

PREFACE.

In presenting to the christian reader a new and enlarged edition of the *MEDITATIONES HEBRAICÆ*, I feel constrained to acknowledge the kind and indulgent manner in which the former edition has been received, both in this country and in America. And while very sensible of the many faults and imperfections which still cleave to the work, I can truly say that I have spared no pains to make it really useful. Not a single remark of any reviewer has been passed lightly by; every objection has been maturely weighed; every doctrinal position has been rigidly tested, before being taken up again. I have made myself acquainted also to a considerable extent, with what others have written on the Epistle, and it has been a great gratification to find myself substantially at one with such writers as Barnes in America and Ebrard in Germany.

The reader will find the work much more convenient for reference than it formerly was. And every emendation of the text is printed in capital letters, that the eye may at once discern it. If he is disposed to ask whence these emendations are derived, I refer him to the English Hexapla, to the Critical Commentary of the late Professor Stuart, to the *Horæ Hebraicæ* of the Duke of Manchester, and to a new translation of the Epistle by the Rev. Henry Craik of Bristol. I beg to recommend the last work to all who value the exact interpretation of God's word. The acknowledged learning and Christian excellence of its Author constrain me to say, "*cum talis sis, utinam noster eses!*"

I cannot refrain from an expression of my earnest hope that it may please God to accept and bless this feeble effort; feeble indeed if compared with its mighty subject, but still a step in the right direction which others may be induced to follow. The devotion to Patristic theology which now prevails, has well nigh ruined the Church; and to my brethren the Clergy I would express my solemn conviction that if we would be owned and blessed of God as the spiritual Guides of His

people, we must devote ourselves instead, to the study of His Holy oracles. And the taught as well as the teacher may find something to suit him in these pages. The private christian may discover the falsehood of a recent allegation, that whereas ancient christianity was a matter of substantial truth and a religion of faith, what is called modern evangelicalism is a religion of feeling only. And in hours of sorrow, weakness, and temptation, he may be at once cheered and sustained by the truth which is here presented to him. And even those who from the occupations and engrossments of business, have not leisure for private reading, need not be repelled from these volumes. They contain suitable matter for family-reading, and may prove useful in this way to the Head of the family-circle and to those who have the charge of youth. The former edition has, I know, been extensively used for these purposes; and it has been to me no small gratification to find that the lectures have been both understood and appreciated by a most important class in the community, I mean domestic servants. There can be no greater mistake than to suppose that the unlearned are capable of understanding only the precepts of Christianity. They can understand its deepest truths, if they are intelligibly set before them.

If these and similar results shall attend this renewed labour, the labourer has his reward; he must thank God and take courage.

St. Matthew's Parsonage, Rugby,
October, 1854.

INTRODUCTION.

BETWEEN the giving of the law on Sinai and the virtual abolition of the Mosaic economy on the day of Pentecost, there intervened a period of about fifteen hundred years. That economy therefore, before its abolition, could number nearly as many centuries as the Christian dispensation can number now. And besides this claim of venerable antiquity, as the religion of his fathers' fathers, the legal dispensation at once commended itself to the most sacred feelings of a Hebrew, and appealed to his self-love and even to his senses for its support. The Most High had descended from heaven to ordain it, surrounded by myriads of holy angels; its Mediator had been the most distinguished prophet whom the world had ever seen; its holy ministrations had been conducted by an unbroken succession of Heaven-appointed priests. And whilst the splendour of the sacred edifice in which God was pleased to dwell, the gorgeous vestments of the ministers, and the pompous and imposing ritual, conspired to fascinate the senses, the self-love of the Hebrew was gratified by the reflection that all this was for him,—that his nation was the peculiar people, the favoured heritage of the Lord. We can well conceive then what a shock it must have proved to every feeling which is dear to the heart of man, when the believing Hebrews began first to understand that all this was to pass away; that God had forsaken the temple, and no longer regarded either the priest or the sacrifice; that the institutions of Moses had lost both authority and utility, and that Jew and Gentile were one family in Christ. God is ever tender of the feelings of his people; and these unwelcome intimations were therefore given by degrees. And in the days which immediately succeeded Pentecost, when the hearts of those who believed on Jesus were filled to overflowing with peace and joy and love, they would be more able to say concerning all things, "Thy will be done." But these days of sunshine were not to last for ever. Years rolled over the Churches of God in Palestine; the abounding of iniquity began to cause their love to wax cold, and the long continuance of persecution at length broke their spirits and subdued their courage. We cannot wonder that in these circumstances, ancient attachments and prejudices should have revived in their bosoms, and that while they were still desirous to cleave to Jesus, they should have felt most unwilling to forsake Moses and his law. And this seems to have been the very state of things among them, when the great Apostle of the Gentiles, from the solitude of his Roman prison, indited this *Epistle to the Hebrews*.

Inspiration does not interfere with the natural current of thought; St. Paul addresses them therefore in the way most fitted to convince their understandings and to subdue their prejudices. His whole argument is based on one consideration, viz. that Messiah the Mediator of the new dispensation, is the Son of God. He proves by this, that Jesus is more exalted than those holy intelligences who were present when the law was given, and those inspired prophets who attested it from one generation to another. The same consideration demonstrates that he is more exalted than Moses the mediator of the legal covenant, and the family of Aaron its priests and ministers. The deep humiliation of Jesus of Nazareth is shewn to be nowise inconsistent with this glorious dignity. He took this mortal flesh, they are told, that he might be a sacrifice for sin: and on that sacrifice his mediation is founded; a mediation as much more excellent than that of Aaron, as the Divine person of the Son of God is more excellent than that of a sinful, dying man. The gorgeous temple in which their high-priest officiated, and his imposing ritual, are shewn to be mere figures of that heaven of heavens in which Jesus intercedes, and of his glorious and eternal ministrations. He urges them therefore not to hesitate between the imperfect and the perfect thing, and not to seek to mingle the shadow with the substance. The doctrine of the epistle and its exhortation may in short be expressed in one word. *The Substance has come*, says the writer; be contented therefore that *the shadows flee away*.

But these Jewish prejudices, it may be said, are now antiquated and forgotten; and the Epistle to the Hebrews is therefore of less importance to us than the other books of the New Testament. I would remind those who are inclined to think so, that this treatise on the Mosaic law, was indited, not by the apostles of *the Circumcision*, but by the Apostle of *THE GENTILES** Is not this circumstance like a link between the two dispensations? Does it not look like a word of direction from God, bidding us *Gentiles* attend to the law of Moses? I apprehend that it is so. And the character of the epistle is in keeping with this circumstance. For it connects the Old and New Testaments together, holding the torch of the Spirit to the institutions of Moses, and discovering to us in type and figure the blessed mysteries of our faith. Every illustration of the gospel taken from human things, is essentially [defective, because the creature in its best estate, is unable to represent God. But the illustration which is thus furnished, is comprehensive and without defect; the tabernacle was

* *The Pauline origin* of the epistle is taken for granted throughout this exposition. I have examined the objections to it with great care, but they seem to me exceedingly weak and inconclusive. The late Professor Stuart has brought a mass of learning to bear upon the question, and to his able and unanswerable argument I refer the reader. He may consult also Barnes and Ebrard. It ought however to be mentioned that Ebrard ascribes the actual composition of the Epistle to St. Luke, but under the eye and direction of St. Paul.

ordained by God for that express end and object ; and there is not a single doctrinal error which has ever troubled the Church, which in its heavenly light does not stand exposed and condemned. We ought on this account to bestow our most earnest consideration on the institutions of the Hebrew lawgiver. Oh that this appeal might induce the ministers of Christ to do so! Heresiarchs would then be no longer able, as in the days of the famous Horsley, to base false doctrine on dishonest Greek criticisms ; the broad light which Moses throws forward on his illustrious Antitype, would rebuke at once both their wickedness and their folly.

Many proofs of the truth of these statements occur in the course of this exposition ; let me however sum up the argument, and lay it in *brief* before the mind of the reader. Three leading features stand out from the others and arrest our attention, when we carefully examine the tabernacle of Moses and the worship carried on within it. The first is, the immeasurable distance which it established between the Creator and the creature. Upon the ark, between the Cherubim, and within the vail, there was placed THE THRONE OF DEITY, THE INALIENABLE SEAT OF THE SUPREME. Israel was often privileged with angel-visitants ; but Gabriel himself never presumed to intrude into that seat of honour. The high-priest, the most favoured of the sons of Israel, was permitted to stand before it, once a year ; but no other Israelite, not even the best and holiest, set foot, from infancy to grey hairs, even within the sanctuary which contained it. The second thing which arrests our attention, is that He who dwelt between the Cherubim, might be approached only through the slain sacrifice and the cleansing water ; and the brazen altar and brazen laver stood continually for these purposes, in the outer court. And there was yet a third remarkable feature in the worship enjoined by Moses. A ministry headed up in the high-priest, mediated with God on Israel's behalf ; and it was an essential requisite of these ministers that they should be compassed with the infirmities of the people. Now these Mosaic ordinances, as St. Paul expressly declares, (viii. 5,) were "an example and shadow of heavenly things." And faith discovers in the light of this precious epistle, "a throne set in heaven," the antitype of that which was of old between the Cherubim. It discovers moreover two PERSONS sitting on that throne, for it hears ONE invite ANOTHER to come up and sit beside him, (i. 13,) and sees the invitation accepted. (i. 3, xii. 2.) He who gives this invitation is the eternal Father ; (i. 1, 2, 5, 13 ;) he who accepts it, is Jesus Christ the Saviour and High-Priest of the Church. (viii. 1, x. 12.) A THIRD PERSON is also spoken of, viz. the Holy Ghost ; he is referred to as the Instructor of mankind, (iii. 7,) and the inditer of holy Scripture. (ix. 8, x. 15.) Faith discovers besides this, a sacrifice and blood presented on high, (ix. 11, 12,) and hears the Saviour who presents it, promising the true cleansing water, even the Spirit of grace to wash his people's hearts from wickedness and to bind them to the service of God. (viii. 10, 11.) It sees that Saviour mediating within the holiest on their behalf ; (ix. 24 ;) it is told that he is qualified for this office of mercy,

because he took their nature and was compassed with their infirmities; (iv. 14, 15;) it is assured that his mediation is effectual, because his one offering has rent the vail. It can even hear his gracious voice inviting us within that sanctuary, bidding us come with our consciences pacified in his blood and our hearts cleansed by his holy Spirit. (x. 21, 22.)

Let us next examine by the aid of this heavenly light, every form of false doctrine which troubles the Church now, or has troubled her in ages past, and also every variety of theological sentiment. We have only to keep closely to the pattern, to discern the precious from the vile.

The great perversion of Christianity to which modern times have given birth, is UNITARIANISM. The leading tenet of that system, from which also it derives its name, is *unity of person* in the Godhead; and with this are necessarily allied a Saviour who is *merely a creature*, and a religion *without sacrifice*. If we remind the Unitarian that Christ is called God, he answers the argument with a Greek criticism; if we remind him further that he is said to be seated at the right hand of God, he explains it to signify simply high exaltation; if we remind him finally, that "Christ our passover" is said to be "sacrificed for us," he tells us that the apostles being Jews, used Jewish phraseology. But let us bring his system to the test which has just been mentioned. St. Paul declares expressly that the holiest in the Jewish Tabernacle was a figure of God's dwelling-place above, (ix. 9, 24,) and that the seat between the Cherubim was a figure of the throne in the heaven of heavens. (viii. 1, 2.) Now every one possessed of moral honesty must acknowledge that the strict appropriation of that seat to DEITY ALONE was an essential feature of the Jewish dispensation; that the very thought or mention of Gabriel among angels, or David or Elijah among men, assuming it, would have made a devout Hebrew tremble from head to foot with horror. What then can be said when St. Paul lifts the pattern from earth to heaven, (viii. 1.) and discovers to us Jesus occupying that seat above? No one may explain this away as super-angelic exaltation. Moses points with reverence and awe to THE THRONE OF THE SUPREME; and St. Paul reveals to us Jesus sitting ON THAT THRONE. If Jesus is a creature, he ranks with Gabriel or with David; and to say that God can thus exalt the creature, is to say that the creature is Divine. The Unitarian system is thus discovered to be false in its two leading tenets; for if the Saviour be a Divine person, there is of necessity in the Godhead, more than one personality. And this conclusion is confirmed by other parts of the figure; for in cap. i. 13, x. 12, 13, TWO PERSONS are discovered to us sitting on that throne, and in cap. iii. 7, ix. 8, x. 15, A THIRD PERSON is spoken of, to whom the acts of God are ascribed. The same remarks will apply to the remaining tenet of Unitarianism. Every one possessed of moral honesty must acknowledge that Jewish worship was based on sacrifice, that the blood of expiatory victims consecrated every step of the creature's approach to God. And if this was designed by God as "an example and shadow" of Christian realities to come,

It follows undeniably that there must be a true and real sacrifice, answering to these Jewish figures, and that Christian worship and service must have continual respect to that sacrifice. And this is just what the apostle declares, in every variety of language. (viii. 3, ix. 14, 22, 23, 26, 28, x. 12, 14, 19.) To call this language Jewish phraseology, is absolutely profane; for St. Paul tells us that in thus explaining Jewish figures, he is expounding the intention of the Holy Ghost in ordaining them. (ix. 8.) Unitarianism stands thus convicted a second time, in the light of the tabernacle of Moses. It may be a system of philosophy; but if that light be Divine, it has rejected the essential elements of Christianity, and is in character thoroughly infidel.

The language of the modern Rationalistic Jewish Church of Germany, is a striking proof of all that has now been advanced, and shows plainly that this last remark is not uncharitable but true. "If Mosaism" they say "was the radix of Christianity and also an expiatory system, then the death of Christ is the fulfilment of the Mosaic type. But this we utterly deny; we utterly reject the doctrine of the fall of man, and the necessity of a propitiatory sacrifice of infinite value for his recovery again." Now here are "the essential elements of Christianity," the fall of man and God's infinite redeeming love. They are acknowledged as taught in the Mosaic type, and for that very reason the type is rejected as Divine. It only proves how faithfully it has expressed its antitype, and that "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

POPERY is the other grand perversion of the Christian faith with which modern times have to do; and it also stands exposed and condemned in the light of the tabernacle of Moses. For it appoints the continual repetition of propitiatory offerings for the sins of quick and dead. Now St. Paul declares expressly that the repetition of sacrifices under the Mosaic economy demonstrated their inefficacy; that if they had accomplished the object of sacrifice, they would have ceased to be offered. (x. 2.) As the necessary consequence, he further tells us, of a state of things which required the repetition of propitiatory offerings, the veil was unrent, i.e. God was unpropitiated, (ix. 7. 8.) and the conscience of the worshipper was unpacified and troubled. (ix. 9, x. 1, 3.) What then shall be said of the continual sacrifices of Popery, when the light of the tabernacle is brought to bear on them? Their repetition demonstrates their inefficacy, demonstrates that they are unable to propitiate the Most High. But that which is offered, is the body and blood of Christ. This only makes the matter worse, infinitely worse. The Jew was aware that his propitiatory offerings were inefficacious; but he looked for a sacrifice to come. We Christians have no such cheering prospect; "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin" than the body and blood of Christ; and if even that sacrifice requires repetition, if even that offering is inefficacious, God never can be propitiated, sin never can be atoned for. And Popery therefore, in this her leading ordinance, assails THE VERY VITALS of redemption. This argument is well worthy the consideration of

those who though standing aloof in some respects from that anti-christian system, are yet found maintaining as "a doctrine of first-rate importance," that there are truly and properly in the Christian Church altars, sacrifices, and priests. We are forcibly reminded of the nervous language of St. Paul, "Ye who desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" Ye who maintain such views, do ye know to what they necessarily lead? When you shall have demonstrated them to be sound and true, the Christian Church will be indebted to you for having proved to her that sin is unatoned for, and NEVER CAN BE ATONED FOR; that God is unpropitiated, and NEVER CAN BE PROPITIATED; that she and her children are now, and MUST REMAIN FOR EVER, under the curse of the broken law. It is impossible for the ablest advocates of these sentiments to rebut this irresistible conclusion. For if the ordinances of Moses be "the example and shadow of heavenly things," CONTINUED SACRIFICE and A PROPITIATED GOD are utterly and for ever irreconcilable.

But Popery does more than practise continued sacrifice; she offers her sacrifices within the holiest of all. St. Paul tells us expressly, (x. 19.) that we have "boldness to enter into the holiest;" and all Christian worship is conducted, all prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving are offered there. God's paternal presence is the true holiest: do we not say "Our Father which art in heaven," "Almighty and most merciful Father," "We beseech thee, O Father?" And it is there, i.e. *in God's immediate presence*, that the sacrifice of the Mass is offered for the cleansing of His people from their sins. This is most emphatically rebuked by the tabernacle. The fundamental principle of the law of Moses, was that no unclean thing might appear in the presence of God. He therefore appointed two altars. The one altar (of brass) was for atoning sacrifice, and stood in the outer court. The other altar (of gold) was for the incense of those cleansed by sacrifice, and stood in the holy place, before the veil of the holiest. As for the holiest itself, it might not be entered save once a year, and never without the atoning blood of a victim previously slain. Had a Jewish Priest presumed to lead a bull or a goat within the precincts of that sacred presence-chamber to have made atonement there with its blood, he would have been struck dead on the instant, for his impiety. But this is just what the Priest of Rome has been doing for ages and is doing at this hour; Rome's most solemn act of worship is bringing a propitiatory sacrifice into the holiest of all. It matters nothing that this sacrifice is unbloody. It is a sacrifice for the taking away of sin; its very presentation is therefore an acknowledgement that those for whom it is presented, are unclean. What then have they to do with God, how dare they to approach Him? It was a mortal sin, while the first tabernacle stood, for the unclean to come into His presence, or to touch anything that related to His holy service. (Leviticus vii. 20.) And that tabernacle with its ordinances, was an "example and shadow" of Christian realities now.

The same blessed light may be brought to bear, and with equal effect, on the heresies of the ancient Church. The SABELLIANS taught

that there was only one personality in the Godhead, acting sometimes as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Holy Ghost. This heresy is rebuked by the tabernacle; as St. Paul holds the torch of the Spirit to the seat between the Cherubim, he discovers to us **TWO PERSONS** sitting on it, in dialogue and communion together. (i. 13.) The **TRITHEISTS** taught on the other hand, that there were three Gods. This also is rebuked by the tabernacle. Moses was privileged to hear the voice which proceeded from between the Cherubim, (Numbers vii. 89,) and the very first lesson which he himself learned, and afterwards taught to Israel, was, "The Lord our God is **ONE LORD**." (Deuteronomy vi. 4.) The **NESTORIANS** taught that there were in Christ a Divine and a human person, that the Divinity dwelt in the man Christ Jesus as in a temple. But the man Christ Jesus sits between the Cherubim; and so this heresy, like Unitarianism, would exalt a creature to the throne of God! The **EUTYCHIAN**s taught that the Saviour had a celestial body; while the kindred heresy of the **APOLLINARIANS** denied to him a human soul. Both these heresies are most emphatically rebuked if we compare Moses with St. Paul. For Jesus could not have been the antitype of Aaron, the high-priest "compassed with infirmity," if the doctrine of either had been the truth.

We may bring the same light to bear on the shades of opinion among ourselves. Does the **ANTINOMIAN** tell us that Christ has died for him and made his peace with God, and that he is therefore under no obligation of personally walking in God's ways? He may be safely challenged in reply, to name a single sacrifice enjoined by Moses which exempted the offerer from the obligation of obedience. The purpose of every sacrifice enjoined by the Hebrew lawgiver was in truth the very opposite, it was designed to cleanse the offerer that his service and obedience might be accepted. And if his institutions are to be regarded as a shadow of Christian realities, the purpose of the sacrifice of Christ must necessarily be the same. Does the **ARMENIAN** tell us that the sacrifice of Christ is not a sufficient ground of confidence, that there is "a qualified merit" in faith, repentance, and good works? Moses again rebukes the sentiment. For while he appointed sacrifice as the way of approach to God, he appointed nothing else. The priests who presented the sacrifices, were commanded indeed to wash their hands and feet in cleansing water; and we in like manner, must be cleansed in heart and life by the Spirit of grace, that we may draw near to God in faith of his slain Son, and walk before him as his children. But the water in the Jewish tabernacle did not atone for sin, or procure ceremonial absolution; that was the virtue of the blood alone. And the case is the same still. The work of the Spirit in our hearts and the fruit of it which appears in our lives, are not and never can be our atonement; they therefore are not and never can be our confidence toward God. Finally, does the **HIGH-CALVINIST** tell us that Christ died for his people only, and that it is not lawful to invite all men to draw near to God as a Father? St. Paul reminds him in reply, that

God was once inaccessible, when the veil concealed him, (ix. 3, 7, 8,) but that the veil is rent now, and that he is in consequence inaccessible no longer. (x. 19, 20.) We must either then forbear to tell men any thing about him, or we must declare him as a Father. For there is no such Being under the Christian dispensation as an inaccessible God; the veil which once concealed him, is now "rent in twain from the top to the bottom," (Matthew xxvii. 51,) and that rending was his own act. Woe unto us if with our puny needlework we seek to stitch it up again!

There is however an abuse of the institutions of Moses as well as a reverent use of them. To return to them in the letter, to copy their pattern, is a gross and most heinous abuse. Figurative and symbolical teaching suited the shadowy character of the Mosaic dispensation. The form of the tabernacle, the architecture of the temple, the robes of the priesthood, were therefore all figures. Moses had a pattern in the Mount after which he copied; King David had "a pattern by the Spirit" of all "the courts and chambers of the house of the Lord." (I Chronicles xxviii. 11—19.) But what suited the external and shadowy dispensation of Moses, is for that very reason, unsuited to a dispensation of spiritual realities, and is therefore nowhere in the New Testament commanded of the Lord. It could not indeed have been commanded, for the two are inconsistent with each other. We cannot have meridian sunlight and moonlight at the same instant. And Christianity is meridian sunlight; the moonlight of Jewish shadows has therefore, of necessity, fled away. Besides, we never value the shadow when we have got the substance. A very simple but apt illustration of this, occurs in the history of the early Church. "They brought forth the sick into the streets" says St. Luke, "and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least *the shadow* of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." (Acts v. 15.) Let us observe the expression "at the least." They could not get access to the Apostle's person; he was overborne by the multitude of applicants for aid. And so, debarred from the substance, they were fain to be content with the shadow. But we do not read that when the same apostle was actually in the house of Dorcas, (Acts ix. 37—42,) the weeping widows took the body of their benefactress and laid it in his shadow!! Such a statement would have been ridiculous; the shadow was useless because the substance was there. And it is so with higher things. While the Son of God had not yet come, the blue, the purple, the scarlet, the fine linen, were meet adumbrations of the Royal, Heavenly, Holy High-Priest for whom the Church was reverently waiting. But nothing can be conceived more mischievous than to cleave to them now. It is to deny that He has come; it is to say that we have not Him with us "always even to the end of the world." (Matthew xxviii. 20.)

The records of the New Testament bearing testimony, as they do, to the striking difference in this respect between the two dispensations, completely bear out these remarks. Every work of God is perfect as it comes from His hand; the reader may therefore compare for himself the fortieth of Exodus and second of Acts. The dispensation of Moses commenced with a gorgeous tabernacle, and a priesthood

glittering in gold and gems ; when that costly edifice was reared up and provided with its costly furniture, God descended into it and filled it with His glory. The Christian dispensation commenced in an upper room—such an apartment as poor fishermen whose best robe was the fisherman's coat, were able to hire for their use ; upon these humble men, assembled in this humble retreat, the Holy Ghost descended in cloven tongues of fire. This is indeed no argument for God's people assembling now in upper rooms to worship him, or for his ministers conducting that worship without seemly attire ; we are in circumstances to provide otherwise, and there is no reason why the tasteful and becoming should not be consulted in the worship of God. But it proves most emphatically that clerical robes and ecclesiastical architecture form no part of the Christian dispensation ; they are decencies indeed for the eyes of men, but no higher character can be claimed for them ; they are not matters of religion, nor have they any value in the eyes of the Lord. The tendency of the present day however, is to invest them with this character. It is indeed already assigned to architecture. We are told that "every part of a Church is instinct with doctrine," that "each architectural feature conveys religious instruction," that "a Church-architect" should make his profession "a matter of devotion and prayer," and seek "to be filled from above with the Spirit of wisdom"! The Church of Rome, consistent throughout, has long attached it both to architecture and vestments. To attach it to either, is distinct Judaism. And being, as we are, without the warrant which the Jew could plead, we are guilty in doing so, of a systematic violation of the precept which forbids us to make likenesses of things in heaven above. It is in vain for the advocates of this Christian symbolism, to appeal to the Old Testament in its support. They ought to know that it is emphatically declared in the New Testament, that symbolism died when reality was introduced. It is equally vain to appeal to the history of the Church, as if the antiquity of symbolical architecture and of holy vestments stamped a Divine character upon them. Those who say so, ought to know in the first place, that while these things were among the Jews the original injunction of God, they were among Christians the after-thought of man. And they ought to know in the second place, that the mystery of iniquity, i.e. the grafting of Judaism and Heathenism on Christianity, had begun to work even in the days of St. Paul. (II Thessalonians ii. 7.) Their appeals to reason forcibly remind us of the reply of the Jewish prophet to the disobedient Jewish king. "Hath the Lord as great delight" he said, "in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." (I Samuel xv. 22.) This is a sufficient answer to every argument for the utility of symbolic representations of heavenly mysteries,—GOD HAS FORBIDDEN THEM. Besides, the alleged utility exists only in the imagination of the reasoner. Spiritual devotion is the fruit of the knowledge of God; it leads to God, and is the essence of eternal life. (John xvii. 3. I John i. 1-3.) But

there is also a sensual devotion, and such is that of this meretricious symbolism. It is mere natural feeling excited by appeals to the senses, and its direct tendency is to lead away from Him.

Having thus endeavoured to point out the use and abuse of the Mosaic law, I would direct the attention of the reader to the doctrines contained in these lectures; setting them also in the searching light which shines from the Jewish tabernacle, and dwelling particularly on such as may require further elucidation.

The leading doctrinal views set forth in these lectures, are the TRINITY, the DIVINITY and HUMANITY of Christ, his SACRIFICE AND PRIESTHOOD, together with the REMISSION OF SIN, AND GRACE OF THE HOLY GHOST which they secure, and finally, his yet future COMING AND KINGDOM. It has been shewn already that the first two of these doctrines, viz. the Trinity, and Divinity of the Saviour, correspond exactly with the pattern. And the more that the reader is led to examine Scripture on the matter, the more, I am persuaded, he will be satisfied that all that is set forth concerning the man Jesus, dependent on God and living by faith continually, is fully borne out by his type, a high-priest "compassed with infirmity." The same thing may be said of the doctrine of his sacrifice and priesthood; all that is set forth concerning their spiritual efficacy, is fully justified by the ceremonial efficacy of the sacrifices and priesthood of the house of Aaron. If I have endeavoured to shew moreover that remission of sin and the grace of the Holy Ghost are inseparably and eternally connected, I am again justified by the figure, for the stoning blood and cleansing water were never separated in the tabernacle of Moses. If I have declared that the purpose of Christ's sacrifice is to consecrate us to the service of God; that we need no ground of confidence toward him save that sacrifice alone; that God is now accessible, and that whosoever will, may come to him, I am borne out, as has been shewn already, in every one of these statements. The prophetic views embodied in these lectures, are also borne out by the tabernacle. If I have spoken of three conditions of blessedness and glory hereafter, and endeavoured to explain the priesthood of the saints, I have reminded the reader of the three apartments of that holy sanctuary, and of the occupations of Aaron and his sons. I am not aware in short, that in this exposition of "heavenly things," I have departed in anything from that "example and shadow" with which we are favoured in the word of God.

Two of these points however, viz. the INCARNATION and ATONEMENT of Christ, demand a fuller elucidation than can be given to them in popular discourse.

We are taught in that most orthodox confession of our faith the Athanasian Creed, that "it is necessary to everlasting salvation that we believe rightly THE INCARNATION of our Lord Jesus Christ." I greatly fear that on this subject of vital importance much misapprehension prevails. Many seriously-minded persons seem utterly unaware that the Saviour in taking flesh, proved the condition of the creature,

i. e. was sustained through human weakness by the power of faith and hope; they imagine that He lived and walked on earth in the independent strength of Deity. Now faith and hope are essential to the holy condition of a human reasonable soul. And this sentiment therefore is only a hairsbreadth from the Apollinarian heresy which taught that the Divine nature was the "reasonable soul" of Christ. It is also utterly at variance with the pattern. A High-Priest "compassed with infirmity" was the express type of the Lord Jesus. And infirmity positively implies dependence; to speak of Jesus as "compassed with infirmity" and yet to deny that he lived by faith, is a contradiction in terms. But how could the Son of God, it is asked, come into a condition of dependence? how could he live by faith? Let it rather be asked how he could pass through death; that is the greater mystery of the two. If he was able, though a Divine person, to pass through the death which was man's due, he was surely able to live man's life. The life of our bodies is sustained by breath and food and sleep; that of our souls, as has been already mentioned, by faith and hope and prayer. Jesus in assuming our nature, took to himself both forms of existence; his body grew and was nourished like the bodies of other men, and from the manger to the cross his spirit was conscious to one unbroken act of faith. (Psalm xxii. 9, 10.) This is utterly incomprehensible by reason, but it is the joy and consolation of those who believe it on God's word. And it is impossible to believe otherwise if we take that word as our guide; it is impossible to rise from the perusal of the twenty-second Psalm, believing in our hearts that the Speaker was self-sustained. For his words most emphatically declare the opposite; his humblest servant never made a deeper confession of weakness than is expressed in the complaint "Oⁿ MY STRENGTH, haste thee to help me." This mystery is sometimes explained by the hypothesis that Christ acted on certain occasions, as God, and on other occasions, as man. But those who adopt this hypothesis, forget that it divides the person of the Saviour. The Athanasian Creed teaches us that "as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is ONE CHRIST; who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead." As in every intelligent act of which we are conscious, mind and body concur, so all these acts of the Saviour were acts of a *person*, not sometimes of the Divine, and at other times of the human nature. To maintain the opposite is indeed distinct Nestorianism, for it assigns to the humanity of the Saviour a personal and separate existence. But there are Scriptural examples, it is said in reply, of both these things; we find Jesus acting sometimes in his Divine and sometimes in his human nature. He suffered in his humanity; he wrought his miracles and raised himself from the dead by the power of his Divinity. It must be acknowledged, I answer, as most certain truth, that the Divine nature is incapable of suffering. But though the human mind is incapable of bodily pain, such is the unity of the human being, that we speak of the *man* enduring it. And the sufferings of Christ in like manner, though endured in his

humanity, were the sufferings of a Divine person; "God purchased the Church with his own blood." (Acts xx. 28.) The other statement, viz. that Christ acted sometimes in his Divinity only, is utterly untrue. And to convince the reader of this, I will now enter on a particular consideration of those two examples of it which have just been referred to.

It is indeed most singular that any should be found maintaining that Christ wrought his miracles in his own name. The credentials of an ambassador are not from himself but from the power whose messenger he is. Now Christ came into the world as the ambassador, the servant of the Father, and His miraculous works were the credentials of His mission. If we refer to His words to the Jews, to His disciples, or to the Father who sent Him, we shall find this repeatedly and most emphatically asserted. "Neither came I of myself" He declared to Israel, "but He sent me:" (John viii. 42:) and again, "the works which the Father hath given me to finish, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me:" (v. 36:) and again, "the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." (x. 25.) "Believest thou not?" he said to Philip, "that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak NOT OF MYSELF: but the Father that dwelleth in me, HE DOTH THE WORKS." (xiv. 10.) Let us also reverently observe him when just about to perform the greatest of his miracles, the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead. His apostle who was doubtless an eye-witness, tells us that "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." He did not offer this thanksgiving because it was unusual for the Father to hear Him; He tells us Himself that it was for their sakes who stood by, that in the stupendous miracle about to be wrought, they might have another witness that the Father had sent Him. "When He thus had spoken" adds St. John, "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!" And that God who answered Elijah on Mount Carmel, (I Kings xviii. 36-38,) bore immediate witness to His holy child Jesus; "he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes." And it only remained for the conqueror of death to add, "Loose him, and let him go." (John xi. 41-44.) Surely these testimonies are decisive. And the doctrine which they teach, has abundant confirmation from other parts of the Divine word. The apostle Peter, in his two most important discourses, viz. the first announcements of the gospel respectively to the Jews and to the Gentiles, refers explicitly to the miracles of his Master. "Ye have taken Jesus of Nazareth, ye men of Israel," he says to the Jews, "a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which GOD DID BY HIM in the midst of you." (Acts ii. 22, 23.) "We are witnesses" he tells the Gentiles, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM." (x. 38, 39.) These last words are most important; they not only declare that the mighty acts of Christ were the fruit of that Divine power which rested on him, but refer us to his baptism in the

Jordan when the Holy Ghost in a bodily shape like a dove, descended on his sacred head, as the season when he received this power. And we are thus furnished with a most satisfactory explanation of the difficulty that though the man Jesus was a Divine person from his birth, he did not perform a single miracle till he was thirty years of age. The Father's time was not come. The credentials of the messenger did not therefore precede the message; he who acted in all things as the Father's servant, HAD NOT RECEIVED THE POWER. The legends of superstition tell us indeed of the miracles of the child Jesus, wrought for the support of his family!! It is not enough to say that we have no record of such miracles in Scripture; these legends are convicted of impious falsehood by the words which have just been quoted; they embody false doctrine concerning the Christ of God. It is no doubt true that Christ wrought many miracles without making mention of the Father. But there are many instances, I would remind the reader of his servants doing the same thing. When Elijah, just before his translation, had arrived at the Jordan, he made mention of no name, but "took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither." (II Kings ii. 8.) And when St. Paul saw at Lystra a lame man who "had faith to be healed," he also made mention of no name, but said to the sufferer, "Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked." (Acts xiv. 8-10.) When Scripture has distinctly stated a principle, it does not always repeat the statement; from our knowledge of the harmony of the Divine actions, we ought to be able to apply it for ourselves. If the Saviour wrought *some*, he doubtless wrought *all* his miracles by the power of the Father which rested on him. The same power rested afterwards on his apostles. And thus those miraculous signs which "manifested forth his glory" as THE SON, (John ii. 11,) declared them to be "*the servants of the Most High God,*" sent to shew to men "*the way of salvation.*" (Acts xvi. 17.)

It is still more singular that any should be found maintaining that Christ raised himself from the dead. For the declarations of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, his repeated assertion that God had raised his Master from the dead, and his application to Jesus of the sixteenth Psalm which speaks of resurrection as having been the object of his faith and hope in that God's eternal mercy, might have settled this question for ever. And other Scriptures abundantly confirm this testimony; there is indeed scarcely any truth of our holy religion on which Scripture is so evidently harmonious. It is declared *thirty-one times* in the New Testament, that GOD THE FATHER raised the Son from the dead. The reader may consult Acts ii. 24; 30, 31; 32; iii. 15; 26; iv. 10; v. 30; x. 40; xiii. 30; 33; 34; 37; xvii. 31. He may consult also Romans iv. 24; vi. 4; 9; vii. 4; viii. 11; x. 9; I Corinthians vi. 14; xv. 15; II Corinthians iv. 14; Galatians i. 1; Ephesians i. 20; Philippians ii. 9; Colossians ii. 12; I Thessalonians i. 10; II Timothy ii. 8; Hebrews xiii. 20; I Peter i. 3; 21; Revelation i. 5. And if after consulting these Scriptures, he turns to the book of Psalms, he will find a glorious confirmation of the same consoling truth. I have

had occasion in the course of these lectures, to refer for this purpose to the sixth, thirtieth, and eighty-eighth Psalms. I trust that none of my readers will for a moment imagine that I have struck out a new path in doing so. Bishop Horne, the authority of the devout, and Bishop Horsley, of the learned, agree in applying the thirtieth and eighty-eighth Psalms to Messiah; and our Church by appointing the latter of these Psalms for Good Friday, shews that she also believes it to testify of Jesus. But even were such authority wanting, no one can observe the way in which St. Paul and his brethren refer to this portion of Scripture, without being convinced that to testify of Jesus is the rule of the Psalms, and that application to anything else is the exception. Some one however may reply that if the Father and Son are one, it matters nothing whether we say that the Son raised himself, or that the Father raised him from the dead. This is a most serious misconception; it is of the utmost importance to discriminate the actings of Godhead. The man who should say that the Father died on the cross, would in vain seek to shelter himself from the charge of false doctrine by pleading the unity of God. And he who shall say that the Son raised himself from the dead, maintains as vital an error.

But did not Christ declare on two occasions that resurrection was to be the act of His own Almighty power! This is an entire misconception; we have only to examine His words to be convinced that they declare the contrary. "Destroy this temple" He said to the Jews, (John ii. 19,) "and in three days I will raise it up...He spake of the temple of His body." And if they asked how He was to do this, they had again their answer from Himself. "I have power to lay down my life," He said, (x. 18,) "and *I have power to take it again; this commandment have I received of my Father.*" How plain, how unambiguous are these words! The Son of God is to raise up the temple of His body, for He has power to do so, and the power is the commandment received. Now it is faith alone which receives, it is faith alone which obeys a commandment: and it was therefore by faith in the Father that the Son was raised from the dead.

Detailed examination of the latter of these texts only establishes the conclusion we have drawn from it. The Greek word (*ἐξουσία*) which our translators have rendered *power*, almost always signifies something delegated by another. (See Matthew ix. 8; x. 1; Mark iii. 15.) Our Lord himself uses it repeatedly (see John xvii. 2; xix. 11; Matthew xxviii. 18; Revelation ii. 26,) to express delegated authority. This is evidently one of its meanings in the text before us. The Saviour held his human life in trust for the Father from whom he received it, and neither laid it down nor took it up again save by that Father's authority. And there is ability as well as authority in the word of the Most High; he who hears him say "Have not I commanded thee," finds strength to do his will. We have a most beautiful example of this double meaning of *power* in John i. 12. "To as many as received him," says that Apostle, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God," i. e. he gave to them at once authority and holy ability to assume that glorious privilege. The same double meaning is manifest

in the words before us. Christ's power to lay down his life was the commandment which he had received of the Father, i. e. the blessed consciousness that he was doing the Father's will, bore him through Gethsemane and Calvary. His power to take his life again, was of the very same nature, for he tells us himself, "this commandment have I received." The dead indeed cannot obey a commandment, but "he that believeth in me," says the Saviour, "though he were dead, yet shall he live;" (John xi. 25;) "the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," he says again; "and they that hear shall live." (v. 25.) And these words were fulfilled in him as the forerunner of his people; he heard the life-giving voice of the Father as he lay dead in Joseph's sepulchre, and hearing it, he lived. His words in the text before us are thus in most beautiful harmony with his words in the sixteenth Psalm. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption; Thou wilt shew me the path of life," —is the natural expression of faith in God, the faith of him who knew that he had received a commandment to take that life again. And the words that follow, "therefore my heart is glad; my flesh also shall rest in hope," plainly teach us that if in his dying moments he commended his spirit to God, he commended his body along with it, lying down to rest in perfect confidence that the Father would awake him at the appointed hour. And this confidence was not disappointed; the word of the Eternal penetrated the recesses of the tomb, and resuscitated his sleeping child on the morning of the third day. The power which Jesus possessed to take his life and to rebuild the temple of his body, was therefore, I repeat, the power of FAITH.

Examination of Scripture has thus demonstrated in the most satisfactory manner, that the Divinity of the Saviour did not act in separation from his humanity; that every thing which he did, was the act of the God-man, and was done through faith in God. One end of incarnation is thus accomplished; He is to us his people, the perfect example of faith; teaching us how to live, how to die, how to rise again, and how to ascend to glory. And we may be exhorted, as in this epistle, to follow the footsteps of him "who endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (xii. 1, 2.)

But what makes it so necessary that we should understand these things? Because we cannot otherwise make intelligent confession of Christ as "perfect God and perfect man." Omnipotence and Self-Sufficiency are the essential attributes of God; weakness and dependence are equally essential to man. How then did these opposites meet? Eutyches taught that the manhood of Christ was lost in His Godhead; it was like a drop of honey or vinegar, he said, absorbed in the boundless ocean. But this would have been *man becoming God*: whereas the mystery of Incarnation was that *God became man*. "Being in the form of God," says St. Paul, He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but emptied Himself...and was made in the likeness of men." (Philippians ii. 6, 7, original text.) The Omnipotent consented for a season not to exert His Omnipotence, the Self-

Sufficient consented to depend, God consented to veil His glory and to limit His actings within the bounds of manhood.* And we confess this mystery when we acknowledge that the Saviour was "perfect man." His "human flesh" might have been sustained by its union with Deity; His "reasonable soul" might have been upheld in like manner, without either faith as its stay in perplexity, or hope as its comfort in sorrow, or prayer as its refuge in danger. But these things are essential to man, he cannot live without them; and if Jesus had lived without them, He would not have been a man. His Divine power might with equal ease have overcome death and burst for Him the barriers of the grave. But such an act was inconsistent with manhood; it is beyond the bounds of humanity. And if He had acted beyond the bounds of humanity, He would have ceased to be "perfect man." Let not the Unitarian then tell us of a human Saviour, for we also speak of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God," (Acts ii. 22,) who was weak as we are, who was dependent continually as we are. Only, while His weakness was real, it was also voluntary; the "perfect man" was also "perfect God." Neither let the Romanist tell us that he finds in the Blessed Virgin, a human being, with a tender human heart, to whom her fellow-creatures can with confidence go. *For the Son is as human as the Mother.* He was tried, but more deeply, with all human temptations; He was exercised, but more painfully, with all human sorrows; He can be touched, but more tenderly, with a feeling of all human infirmities. Only His sympathy is never unavailing, for with His human tenderness there is allied Almighty power. How full is this blessed truth of present consolation! How full is it besides, of everlasting hope! "He who was rich" says St. Paul, "for your sakes became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." (II Corinthians viii. 9.) His Omnipotence and Self-Sufficiency were His riches. He became poor when He abased their glory, in being made a man for us. And now we are rich through His poverty. For through THE SON OF GOD having become a *son of man*, we the *sons of men*, are made THE SONS OF GOD.

On the subject of Christ's ATONEMENT, I may be thought by some to have departed from the pattern; for if the natural Israel was typical of the Israel of God, the sacrifice of Christ, it may be said, ought to be limited to the latter, as the sacrifices enjoined by Moses were exclusively for the benefit of the former. This statement however is more than the truth. Exclusive as the dispensation of Moses was, it permitted strangers to partake of its benefits on condition of their joining themselves to the holy people; as was plainly exemplified in the cases of Rahab and of Ruth. So that the glorious truth of the great sacrifice, as it is set forth in the epistle to the Hebrews, was shadowed forth even then. It is the sacrifice of the true Israel, and yet a sacrifice for the world. For the true Israel, and they alone, partake of

* It is the invaluable remark of Ebrard, "An absolute Being can limit Himself because He is absolute and His own Lord; but a finite being cannot be made absolute."

its benefits; and before we can partake of them, we must be joined to that holy people by believing on the name of the Lord. But all mankind are invited to this participation; for the blood of that blessed sacrifice has rent the vail. "The living God" as St. Paul says elsewhere, "is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." (1 Timothy iv. 10.)

No one who is acquainted with the history of the Church for the last three hundred years, or with its present state, will require to be told that *the extent or limitation* of the atonement, has been and still is a subject of the keenest controversy. I do not envy that man his theological attainments who feels no difficulty in the adjustment of *THIS MIGHTY QUESTION*. Still there appear to be ample materials for a satisfactory settlement of it, if men will bow to the authority of God's word. The words of God are to Theology what the facts of nature are to Science; they may not be set aside by reasoning; whether we can harmonize them or not, they claim the obedience of faith. The Divines of the High-Calvinistic School appear to me to have forgotten this, for they have treated the subject entirely as a matter of reasoning. If God has so loved all men, they say, as to send his Son to die for them, why does he not reveal his love in their hearts, why does he not lead them to repentance, why does he not bestow on them the grace of faith? But it is not competent for human reason to begin with such questions as these. Jesus has testified that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son;" (John iii. 16;) and the Holy Ghost has added to the testimony, that he is "the propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*." (1 John ii. 2.) And faith must do its part in believing these declarations before a word of reasoning can be heard. And there never was a more untrue allegation than that the blessed apostles in setting forth the truth of Christ's atonement or any other heavenly mystery, use vague and ambiguous phraseology. They tell us indeed in some places, that Christ died for all men, and in other places, that he died for his people; but if we are careful to mark the scope of the inspired writer in each particular place, we shall find that the apparent discrepancy is beautiful and perfect harmony. The reader may refer for an example of the truth of this statement, to John x. 11; xv. 13; Ephesians v. 25; 1 Timothy ii. 5, 6. He will find it written in these scriptures, "The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep;" "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for her;" "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." Let the reader next examine the several contexts of these important scriptures. The purpose of every one of them is to exhibit Christ as a pattern. The first presents him as an example of pastoral care; the second, of a friend's devoted affection; the third, of a husband's love; the fourth, of universal philanthropy. And in perfect consistency with these different objects, the inspired writer speaks in the first of the texts cited, of the death of the Shepherd or the sheep; in the second, of the death of the Friend for the

friends; in the third, of the death of the Husband for the wife; and in the fourth, of the death of the Man for all men. No other rule could have been followed. If we introduce universality into either of the texts in St. John, or into the text in the Ephesians, we totally destroy their meaning; it does not proclaim the excellencies of a pastor, a friend, or a husband, that they give alms to the poor. If we introduce speciality into the text in I Timothy, the result is the same; it does not proclaim the philanthropist, that he is kind to his own family. This principle of interpretation, simple as it may appear, explains in the most satisfactory manner, the apparent discrepancies of the inspired writers in setting forth the death of Christ. When they speak of him in his relation to the Church, they always represent it as special; when they present him in his relation to the world, they always declare it universal. Terms of universality therefore when employed by them, may be safely depended on as of definite and certain import. Let but one example be found of departure from the principle which I have stated; let any inspired writer be found declaring, *the man* Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom *for his people*, and I surrender the whole question.

But it is dishonouring to God, some theologians reply, to suppose that he would lift men up to heaven by sending his Son to die for their sins and then cast them down to hell. It is equally dishonouring, they add, to him to whom all his works are known from the beginning, to suppose that he would put himself to an expense of love and mercy for which he knew that there should be no return. On these two points let us hear the Lord Jesus; ONE WORD FROM HIM outweighs the reasonings of a world. "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell," is His deliverance on the first; "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, HOPING FOR NOTHING AGAIN; and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful," is his equally unambiguous declaration on the second. (Matthew xi. 23; Luke vi. 35.) God is now acting then on the latter of these principles, and will yet act on the former. But for what purpose, it is again asked, is the universality of Christ's death contended for?—if men are not saved by it, it comes to the same thing at last. This is not the way to look at the matter; we are to regard atonement, not simply in its bearing on the creature, but in its revelation of God. SELF-MANIFESTATION is the ultimate end of Deity. It is the same thing to the prodigal living among the swine, whether his father's door has been shut against him or he has refused to return; but we do not regard it as the same, in forming our estimate of the father's character. Shall hell be peopled because God has declined to love man, or because man has hated God? This is the question; and the Divine glory is concerned in the answer which we return to it. For the difference between these two things, as regards THE ETERNAL MANIFESTATION OF DEITY, is more than human language can express.

I am well aware however that no citation of Scripture-texts, and no arguments deduced from the character of God, will ever settle this contested question. The controversy lies deeper; the matter really in

debate, is the nature of atonement itself. The view generally taken of this subject by Divines of the High-Calvinistic School, is that Christ so endured the punishment which his people should have borne, that it is impossible in God's righteousness, that they should ever be called to bear it. Now it is superfluous to say that no one holding this view of atonement, can ever believe it universal; an atonement of such a kind is another name for salvation. But there are three fatal objections to it. He could not bear part of what we must have borne. The reproaching conscience, "the worm that dieth not," *that worm whose gnawing Jesus never knew*, is as essential an element in future punishment as "the fire that is not quenched." Again, we bear in our own persons part of what He has borne. The death of the body is as much a part of the curse from which Christ died to redeem His people as are the woes of the world to come. But His having died and borne their penalty does not exempt them from death; the believer is not translated as Enoch and Elijah were. A better life is indeed secured for him, but in the meantime the penalty remains, death passes upon all men "for that all have sinned." (Romans v. 12.) Once more, the perfect truth of the Divine character is the foundation on which all religion rests. Now we are expressly told in this epistle (ix. 22), that forgiving mercy can have no existence except through atonement made; we are told with equal distinctness, (ii. 3; xii. 24, 25,) that we may reject this mercy to our eternal ruin. But if the view of atonement which we are now considering be correct, i. e. if mercy has been purchased for us by a work which has tied up the hands of God's justice, and laid him under a moral necessity of providing that we shall never be punished for our sins, it is not possible, in the nature of things, to reject it. And the strong expressions of Scripture concerning the folly, wickedness, and blindness of those who reject God's peace, are reduced in consequence, to mere figures of speech. The nature of the case, the dealings of God, and the statements of Scripture, combine in this way to prove that such a view of atonement does not set forth its real character. I have endeavoured in different parts of this work, to set forth what I believe to be the truth of God on this matter. Christ was made a curse on our behalf, and his sufferings have taken away our sins. But they have prevailed to do so, not because they were *an amount of pain*, but because they were *holy sufferings*, i. e. because they have cleared the character of the Most High for ever and ever, of all connivance at iniquity and indulgence of transgression. We may in consequence, draw near to God and go in and out before him in the confidence of filial love. We have also a claim on his righteousness. But this is not that he dare not punish us; it is a far dearer claim: we cast ourselves on his eternal truth, assured that it is "impossible for God to lie." The atonement in short which in this work I have endeavoured to set forth, does not minister confidence *against* God, as if some one else kinder than he, had come between us and this dreadful Being. It ministers confidence *toward* God, shewing us that the work of the Saviour was and is the expression of his benignity, that we might

be encouraged to cry to him Abba, Father, and to make his bosom our eternal home.

The result of atonement is closely connected with its nature. In forming our judgement of this matter we must carefully distinguish between atonement *as an act of God*, and atonement *as received by man*. Its result in the former character is that it has opened the way to God. "Having therefore, boldness" says St. Paul, "to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near...let us hold fast the profession of our faith...for if we sin wilfully...there remaineth no more sacrifice." (x. 19-26.) How clearly in these words is the nature of atonement set forth! It is not a work which necessarily infers salvation; it has simply rendered God accessible. It has done this for all; it has done no more for any. Salvation is the result not of atonement *made* simply, but of atonement *received*. To say that any act done for the creature, can secure his eternal peace whilst he is yet walking and living as God's enemy, is distinct Antinomianism. Saul of Tarsus, as we are told in the Acts of the Apostles, looked on with satisfaction to see God's martyr Stephen die. It was true of him whilst he was doing so, that Jesus had loved and given himself for him. And yet he was at that moment a child of wrath; (Ephesians ii. 3;) nor did he wash away his sins till he called on the name of the Lord. (Acts xxii. 16.) This view of the matter seems to my mind to remove every difficulty. If any one feels averse to admit an atonement for the world, because such a view seems to represent it as inefficacious, let me remind him that all which *sacrifice by itself* CAN do, is to open the way to God. The sacrifice of Christ has done this, and in the opened arms and bosom of Deity, its EFFICACY stands revealed. If he is still averse to admit an atonement for all men, because such a view seems to represent that those who are saved, add something to Christ's work to make it efficacious to them, the fear is needless and the conclusion unjust. The believer is led by the Spirit of his risen Lord through that veil which his sacrificial blood has rent, and proves within the holiest the embrace of those paternal arms which the same blessed sacrifice has opened for the sons of men. He who was dead and is alive again, has thus the whole glory of his present and eternal salvation. And God the Father is glorified in the atonement of his Son, "in them that are saved and in them that perish." He is glorified in the salvation of the former, through his mercy received; he is glorified in the others, even though they perish, because the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering have been manifested before their eyes.*

Our view of the atonement of Christ will necessarily affect our view

* Archbishop Usher's Letter on "The Death and Satisfaction of Christ," recommended by the late Dr. Chalmers to the attention of his theological students, contains substantially the views expressed above; the phraseology only is different. The Archbishop says that the sins of all men are *pardonable* in virtue of Christ's work, whilst those of believers are *pardoned*. I prefer to keep more closely to the words of inspiration.

of the Election of God. The election of a people for whom an atonement should be made, is the view of the High-Calvinist; the election of a people for God's service, out of a world for which an atonement has been made, is the Calvinism of the Church of England. But if the atonement is for the world, it is said, there is no place left for election. This objection is the result of superficial consideration of the matter. In his dealings with two generations especially, God made trial of human nature. The first was the generation of the wilderness, who enjoyed his personal ministry in glory; the second was that favoured people who saw and heard him, while he dwelt in humbled flesh. And the result in both cases, was the same. Those who saw the glory of the God of Israel, perished in the wilderness through unbelief; those who saw and heard the Lord Jesus, nailed him to the accursed tree. And the world had yet a further probation; Christ sent his apostles at once to Jew and Gentile, and "God bare witness along with them, both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." (ii. 4.) The Grecian philosophers professed to have been long seeking after God, inquiring into the nature of the soul and searching after certain evidences of its immortality. And when therefore it was announced to the heathen world that he who had been so long sought in vain, had at length revealed himself and was seeking his creatures that he might bless them with life and immortality; when the reality also of this revelation was attested by signs and wonders worthy of the God of love; such an announcement ought to have awakened one universal burst of joy. Historians should have had it to record that

"Men met each other with erected look,
The steps were higher which they took;
Friends to congratulate their friends did haste,
And long inveterate foes saluted as they past."

But alas, how different was the reception of God's message! The apostles with one exception, were gathered to their rest by the sword, the fire, and the torture; and if St. John remained alive, it was because malice was not able to destroy him. Who shall hope after such demonstrations, to prevail with man *as man*? If any one thinks that his zeal and earnestness will do it, and that by the mere power of moral suasion he will induce men to be the servants of God, let him hear the Lord's warning, a warning which, as we have just seen, was most emphatically verified, "If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." (John xv. 20.) But the Father has sworn that Christ shall see his seed. And he fulfils this solemn promise, working in men's hearts by his Spirit, and making a people willing in the day of his power. His word has never returned void to him from the beginning of the world, and never shall to the end; in every generation since the fall, there has been a people to serve him. And let no one say that this mystery of Election is a high theological dogma, and not a practical truth. All truth is practical; the love of the cross and the purpose of election are both of them practical, and both of them

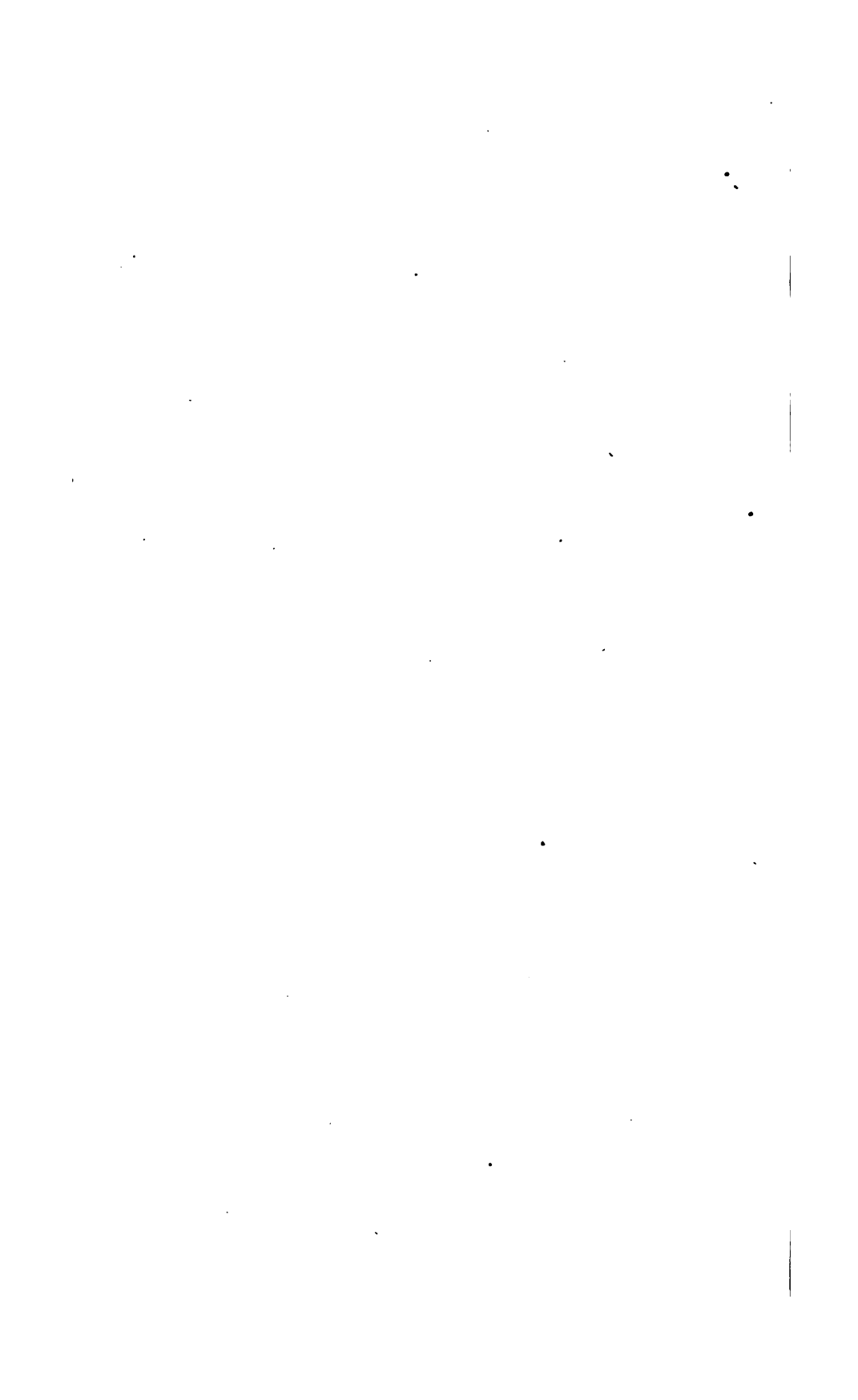
full of consolation. The zealous Elijah was encouraged to plead with Israel on Mount Carmel, from his remembrance of God's unequalled love and covenant-mercy to the seed of Abraham his friend. And when his pleading seemed lost on a people who were "mad upon their idols," God graciously assured him that it was not; even among these apostate ones, said Jehovah, "I have reserved to me seven thousand men." (I Kings xix. 18.) The loving apostle of the Gentiles in like manner, as he beheld the glory of the love of God in the face of Jesus Christ, found blessed encouragement in proclaiming it in Corinth and Ephesus and Thessalonica and Rome. And when his heart failed as he walked through the streets of Corinth and looked upon the fornicators, the idolaters, the thieves and drunkards by whom he was surrounded, He "who comforteth those that are cast down," revived him with the gracious assurance, "I have much people in this city." (Acts xviii. 10.) And the circumstances of God's ministers are the same at this very day. We go forth with the love of the cross in our mouths, encouraged by the message which it is our privilege to bear. But when we come in contact with man and discover his moral state, his apathy to Divine things, his blindness and his unbelief, we are tempted to give over in despair. We have the Divine assurance however that our labour is not in vain, that Christ must have a people, that there is "a remnant according to the election of grace." (Romans xi. 5.) We bless God for the consolation and labour in faith to the end.

There is another deeply practical view of this subject which has commended itself of late, very solemnly, to my mind. St. Paul finds an example of election in those seven thousand faithful confessors of the days of Elias to whom reference has just been made. Now what was the position of these seven thousand? Was the God of Abraham *their God only*, and were the rest of Israel "strangers from the covenants of promise?" No, He was the God of all Israel, and these seven thousand were "faithful among the faithless," believing in Him in whom all should have believed, obeying and worshipping Him whom all should have served, whom all should have adored. Now this is election; God reserving to himself a people whose faith and obedience condemn the world. For "EVEN SO THEN" continues the Apostle, "at this present time also THERE IS A REMNANT ACCORDING TO THE ELECTION OF GRACE." (Romans xi. 3-6.) We see it again in Caleb and Joshua. The promise of the land belonged to all the congregation. These faithful brethren believed what others gave no credit to, and their faith condemned the rest. Once more, we see it in Noah, the man warned of God and the preacher of righteousness. He believed the warning which the men of his age rejected, and by doing so "condemned the world." (Hebrews xi. 7.) To say then that God has loved the elect only and that Christ has died for the elect only, is to destroy altogether the Scriptural idea of election. The elect are a people called out of the world to bear witness for what is true of all, and which all have agreed to reject. That glorious truth is the reconciliation of God. He has so loved the world as to give His only-begotten

Son; (John iii, 16;) He was also in Christ reconciling that world unto Himself; (II Corinthians v. 19;) He may now be approached by all flesh, as a Friend and Father in the Lord Jesus. Men are thus in the position of Israel in the days of Elias and Moses, they are like them in privilege, and like them, alas, in unbelief. The elect are in the position of the seven thousand, and of the two faithful brethren who finally entered Canaan; their faith, love, and obedience condemn the unbelief and rejection of God which surround them. It is an easy thing to contend for election as a doctrine, to make it a test of orthodoxy, to anathematize those who qualify or deny it. All this we may do without realizing our high calling as the elect of God. No man, I am persuaded, realizes that calling who is not distinctly conscious of believing in a "common salvation;" who is not witnessing continually to all around him, *in not believing with me, in not rejoicing with me, you are without apology before God.* This is indeed acknowledged as far as love and obedience are concerned; no one doubts that God's people in this respect, condemn the world. But if it be so, the rest follows. Obligation to love God cannot be separated from the kindred obligation of believing His love to us; if the one be universal, so is the other. And men's incapacity to believe, is as their incapacity to love and to obey, entirely moral. It cannot therefore be pleaded in arrest of judgment; it is another name for alienation of heart, and is the very sin for which God will judge. The calling of the elect out of the world now, is thus in fact a warning of the judgment-seat. God will condemn men another day for their unbelief and rejection of His mercy. And it is only a part of the same procedure of righteousness that in those of like passions with themselves He should take witness against them now.

But I will not extend these observations further. In putting the following exposition into the reader's hands and soliciting his attention to its contents, I am forcibly reminded of the beautiful language in which the Christian poet commends his work to God;—

"Jesus, Jehovah, Lord of heaven and earth,
To whom I owe my first and second birth,
Whose hands first formed me, and whose precious blood
Redeemed my soul and gives me peace with God,
My faithful friend, my Father reconciled,
Accept the offering of thy feeble child,
Whose helpless hands this token mean and small,
Would fondly give to thee, who giv'st him all :
Take both the gift and giver to thy care,
May both thy bounty and thy love declare;
By thee be both directed to fulfil
The holy counsels of thy heavenly will!"



PART I.

SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO PROPHETS AND ANGELS.

LECTURE I.

Hebrews i. 1—3.

"God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son; whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

THIS epistle commences in a style of unusual dignity. The writer does not mention his name, does not refer to his authority. He is evidently conscious that what he writes, needs no name for its sanction, no authority to recommend it to men's attention. And so his statements come at once upon the mind in the naked majesty of eternal truth, claiming the reverent hearing and devout obedience of faith, simply on the ground that they evidence themselves to be divine. But this claim is only their due, as a careful study of this wonderful epistle will, with God's blessing, convince us. Its opening statement demands our first regard.

God, who IN DIVERS PORTIONS, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

Two deeply important truths are contained in these words. The Hebrews, and we after them are, in the first place, reminded, that God, "in divers portions" and in divers manners, spake in time past, unto the fathers, by the prophets. It is, in the second place, solemnly announced to the Hebrews and to us, that the same God hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son. There can be no doubt that by the expression, "these last days," we are to understand the Christian dispensation. And so the "time past" of the former clause must refer to the Jewish dispensation, and not to it only, but to all those dispensations of mercy under which man has been placed, and God has been speaking, since the beginning of the world. These dispensations, including the Jewish, were four in number. The first began with God's word of mercy to our first parents in Eden, and reached to the flood. It was the dispensation of promise—of mere promise: God said that in the fulness of time the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. The second reached from the flood to the call of Abraham. It was the dispensation of promise confirmed by covenant, that covenant of peace of which the rainbow was the sign. The third, commencing with the call of Abraham, continued until the giving of the law. It was the dispensation of promise and covenant, sealed and ratified by sacrament. For circumcision was then appointed the token of the bond between God and his people, the memorial of their duties to him, the pledge of his everlasting faithfulness to them. And the fourth, commencing with the giving of the law, continued until the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus. It was the dispensation of promise and covenant, not only ratified by sacrament, but illustrated and revealed so plainly in type and shadow, that the faith of God's people was able to grasp the substance. Now under every one of these dispensations God was speaking: he spake

"to the fathers," the fathers of the world, the fathers of the Hebrew nation; he spake "by the prophets," addressing man by man's mouth. It was so under the first dispensation: he spake to men then by the ministry of Noah. Others also similarly commissioned, preceded that faithful minister on this errand of mercy. "God," says St. Peter, "spared not the old world, but saved Noah, *the eighth preacher of righteousness.*"¹* What a view does this present to us of the Divine long-suffering! Before he commissioned Noah to lift up his voice, seven preachers of righteousness had delivered their testimony in vain. We cannot wonder that he should then have said, "my spirit shall not always strive with man."² And yet even after this provocation, he spared the old world till he had sent timely warning to its inhabitants by the ministry of Noah. But they added to their former sins, the guilt of despising that ministry; and the vengeance which it threatened at length descended on their heads. And if God thus spake to men, thus instructed, and thus warned them during the first dispensation, we have no reason to believe that he was silent during the second. Noah lived after the flood for three hundred and fifty years, —lived to see the earth peopled with his descendants. The preserver and second father of the human race, was doubtless, the instructor of his children. It was not for lack of teaching, but because the sons of men did not like to retain God in their knowledge,"³ that we find the whole earth, at the period of the call of Abraham, with one consent serving other gods.⁴ The Lord was then pleased to separate a people to himself, and to that people his instructions, admonitions, and warnings were in consequence confined.

¹ II Pet. ii. 5.² Gen. vi. 3.³ Rom. i. 28.⁴ Joshua xxiv. 2.

* There are two other renderings of the words of St. Peter. The former is that of our authorized version, "saved Noah the eighth person;" the latter, which is Luther's rendering, is "saved Noah with seven others." The former rendering is set aside by the single consideration that Noah was not the eighth person from Adam. I Chronicles i. 1—4 shews plainly that he was *the tenth*. The latter is according to classical idiom, and has the support of very high authorities; those may prefer it, who will. But after giving much consideration to the subject, I prefer that which I have given above.

He revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Patriarchs, and they were the instructors of their children and descendants in the knowledge of his name. Abraham is expressly called a prophet;¹ and it is moreover mentioned to his honour, that he commanded his children and household after him to keep the law of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment.² But it was under the fourth dispensation especially that God caused his voice to be heard. He spake then by Moses and Aaron, by Samuel and David, by Isaiah and Jeremiah, by Ezekiel and Daniel, and by many others whose names time would fail us to enumerate. This speaking was "in divers portions;" each dispensation contained a greater amount of light than that which had preceded it. As God went on to speak, He revealed more and more of his character, his ways, and his purpose of salvation. Under the first dispensation he revealed himself a little; and profiting by that little, Abel and Enoch walked before him in righteousness. Under the second, when he established his covenant of peace with Noah on behalf of all mankind, he revealed himself a little more. He revealed himself more still when he separated the family of Abraham, and took them as his peculiar people. And he revealed most of all when he made himself known to Moses, establishing his holy worship in the midst of Israel, and giving to them his statutes, ordinances and laws. Nor was this speaking in divers portions only; it was also "in divers manners." God communicated himself at one time by audible voice; at another, by visions and dreams; at another, by parables or miracles; at another, by types and figures. But all these manners, however diverse, were the revelation of one object—Christ the Saviour, who was thus made known to men in divers portions, as the purpose of God went on to its completion. The gradual light of these partial revelations, which had been shining more and more unto the perfect day, faded then before his meridian brightness. He came, he died, he ascended, he poured down the Holy Ghost, and a

¹ Gen. xx. 7.

² Gen. xviii. 19.

new dispensation began. For "God hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son."

This brings us to the present dispensation, under which we ourselves are placed. It is called "these last days," because it is the last dispensation of the world. There is none to succeed it; God has now told all his mind. It may be said to have begun with Christ's personal ministry; it was made clearly manifest when he ascended on high and commissioned his apostles; it shall continue until he appears the second time. It shall cease then; the day of grace shall cease along with it; and the day of judgment shall begin its awful course.

The grand feature of this dispensation is that THE SON INCARNATE is the speaker of the Father's word. No such act of grace ushered in or distinguished in its progress any preceding dispensation. God spake then by servants, and complained that He was not heeded. He expects to be heeded now; He says, "they will reverence my Son."¹ This must not be passed by; it is the special reason why God expects us to reverence His Gospel. We must not suppose that because Christ is personally absent, it is not so; the text says indeed "hath spoken," but this speaking has not ceased. For the gospel is Christ's word. It "began at the first to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."² Having spoken it himself while in flesh, he inspired his Apostles with it, and has left it as his testimony in the mouth of his ministers, from age to age. St. Paul says therefore, in another place, "see that ye refuse not Him *that speaketh*; for if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him *that speaketh* from Heaven."³ This speaking from Heaven then, this speaking of Christ through his ministers, and in his Church, it is our present, solemn, awful responsibility to hear.

The Hebrews acknowledged that they were bound to reverence God's prophets, and condemned their fathers for having killed them. St. Paul would shew to those who held

¹ Matt. xxi. 33—37.

² Heb. ii. 3.

³ Heb. xii. 25.

the prophets in such reverence, that they ought still more to reverence the Son. He therefore proceeds,—

Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the EXACT IMPRESSION OF HIS SUBSTANCE, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

In these words we have a two-fold reason, applicable equally to the Hebrews and to us, why greater heed should be given to Christ, than to any other by whom God has ever spoken. I. He is a messenger of more exalted dignity. II. He is a minister of more abundant grace.

I. St. Paul has just declared that He who had been speaking by prophets, has now spoken by the Son. And who is he, an unbelieving Jew might have asked, to whom you apply this sacred name? Is it he whom our nation crucified? Do you prefer him to Abraham our father, and Moses our illustrious lawgiver? I do, answers St. Paul. I know that your nation crucified him, but I know also that God hath raised him from the dead, and “appointed” him “heir of all things.” In right of the Father’s Son he is the inheritor of his vast possessions, and is constituted Lord of universal nature. I know that your nation crucified him, for it is written in your own Scriptures that “the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed.” But it is also written, “yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”¹ He was indeed set at nought of your priests and rulers; but it is again written that “the stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner.”² And of these things thus prophesied aforetime my brother and fellow-apostle declared the fulfilment, when he bade you “know assuredly that God hath made him whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”³ The

¹ Psalm ii. 1—6.

² Psalm cxviii. 22.

³ Acts ii. 36.

dignity then of this messenger of God whom you exalt so highly, the unbelieving Jew might have continued, commenced after he rose from the dead. It appears indeed to be the case; for we remember him while he sojourned on earth, a poor, despised and afflicted man. Abraham our father, and Moses our great lawgiver, were honoured while they lived; but his honour and dignity, it appears, is all subsequent to his having left the world. No, replies the apostle; he existed in honour and dignity before the worlds were, for by him the Father "made the worlds." He declares in your own Scriptures, that Jehovah possessed him "in the beginning of his way, before his works of old;" that "he was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, ere ever the earth was." "When he prepared the heavens," he tells you, "*I was there*; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth; when he gave to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his commandment, when he appointed the foundations of the earth, *then I was by him*." He veiled indeed this glory for a season, and became, as you say, a poor, despised and afflicted man, but he did so for our sakes; and when he re-ascended to his native skies, and was installed by the Father in the lordship of heaven and earth, it was only giving to him that which was his own, and placing under his authority the things which his hands had made. Thus clearly, thus fully, thus forcibly does our great Apostle declare the glory of Christ—his honour subsequent to his passion—his dignity from everlasting. Nor does he stop here. Apparently afraid lest any one should misunderstand him, he enlarges on the blessed theme. To prevent us from supposing that Jesus made the worlds, and rules them as the mere servant of a higher power; to put the Hebrews, and us after them, in full possession of the contents of the Saviour's sacred name of Son, he goes on to set it forth in three particulars. He declares him to be the brightness of the Father's glory. The glory of God is his excellence. When Moses said, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory," he said in reply,

¹ Proverbs viii. 22—30.

"I will make all my goodness pass before thee."¹ Of this glory, Jesus is "the brightness." He is excellent as the Father is excellent, and good as the Father is good. All that is perfect and adorable in the Father, is equally to be found in the Son. Nor is this all. In Jesus the Father's glory was manifested: he was "the brightness" or shining forth of it to men. "The Word was made flesh," says St. John, "and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."² In him, the suffering Son of Man, the grace and truth of God shone forth, and the sons of men could behold the heavenly light, because mellowed and reflected from a brother's countenance. And these rays did not shine only, they were concentrated in Jesus; He was "the brightness" of them. We are able, by the operation of a burning-glass, to concentrate the rays of the natural sun, and to bring them to bear with such power that the hardest metals are melted by their influence. And so, "to compare great things with smallest," the rays of the mercy, love and truth of God were concentrated in Jesus, and in his life, ministry and passion brought to bear on the sons of men, that if possible, that hardest of substances, man's obdurate heart might be melted by their power. All this is but expressed in other language in what St. Paul proceeds to say, "and the exact impression of His substance." As the wax retains exactly and faithfully the impression of the seal, so is He, says the Apostle, of whom I am now speaking, the exact impression of the Almighty Father. This explains what Jesus meant when He said, "he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father."³ As the son of the human is human, and in all his features and lineaments declares his human origin, the Son of the Divine is Divine, in all His natural, moral and spiritual attributes declaring Him of whom He is everlastingly begotten. To put it beyond question that this is his meaning, St. Paul adds yet further, "and upholding all things by the word of his power." This at once declares the Omnipotent. The Omnipotent only can

¹ Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19.² John i. 14.³ John xiv. 9.

guide the stars in their courses, and uphold by his all-powerful word the vast fabric of universal nature. And more is implied in this expression. The effect of sin is to destroy mankind. Were it suffered to work unrestrained, human society could not be held together, and the church of God could not exist in the world. But Christ has from the beginning, by the working of his almighty spirit, been restraining this dreadful tendency. He has also preserved society by his holy providence, and upheld, from age to age, a true and faithful church. He himself declares in the Psalms, "the earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it."¹ And to this gracious upbearing, (without which natural, social and spiritual dissolution would ensue,) we owe all our peace in this world, and all our hopes for the world to come. Such acts as these however plainly declare the Omniscient. None but He who knows the hearts of men, their thoughts, feelings, motives and designs, could so rule and restrain them by his spirit and providence. None else could direct, with infallible wisdom, all the intentions and doings of mankind, and make them subservient, from age to age, to the accomplishment of God's eternal purposes. Yet all this Christ does, all this he has done from the beginning.

Such then, is the dignity of the messenger, who, in these last days, has brought to us God's word—the dignity of the Son. He says of himself, "I and my father are one."² For he possesses Divine attributes, he exercises Divine prerogatives, he is the emanation of Divine excellence. He made all things at the first, he has upheld all things from the beginning, he inherits and governs all things. None of the prophets had any dignity approaching to this. They spake in a master's name, and pleaded, as servants, a master's cause. But he pleaded his own cause, and with his own creatures; "he came unto his own, and his own received him not."³ And the case is still the same, wherever the gospel is preached, for in the preached gospel He is speaking from heaven. Oh ye Hebrews, says St. Paul, if ye would

¹ Psalm lxxv. 3.² John x. 30.³ John i. 11.

have hearkened to a prophet, hearken to the Son. The same exhortation is addressed to us. For in the gospel God's cause is pleaded with us; yea, God himself is pleading it. If any man have an ear then, let him hear; for when shall we hear, if not when God speaks?

II. St. Paul adds another reason for hearkening to the Lord Jesus—his abundant grace. He hath, "by himself, purged our sins;" he hath also for us "sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." We cannot doubt who they are, whose sins are here intended. The Apostle is speaking of those to whom God's message comes; God, he says, hath spoken *to us* through him who hath purged *our sins*. Now God is speaking to the world through Christ; and the sins of the world have therefore been purged by Christ. That we may apprehend this aright, we must understand something of the dreadful nature of sin, and something also of its awful consequences. Sin is the transgression by the creature, of the Creator's holy will. And when God debarred our first parents in the beginning, from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, He threatened death as the penalty of such transgression. The essence of death is separation, and the death then threatened, was twofold. It was *first*, the death of the body by its separation from the soul, the source and fountain of its life, and its being resolved once more into the dust from which it came. It was *second*, the spiritual and eternal death of the entire creature by its separation both in time and eternity, from the blessed God. Our first parents transgressed, and incurred this fearful penalty. They incurred it for us their posterity, as well as for themselves. This is evident from fact; death reigns over all men, even over infants. It is evident also from Scripture; St. Paul declares that, "by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."¹ This tremendous curse of the law then, dooming man to death in his body, judicially debarring him from communion with God in his soul, shutting him up in death spiritual, and sealing him for death eternal, descended on all men in the

¹ Romans v. 18.

person of the first man. And our actual transgressions have added to this original guiltiness, so that had not God interposed, our condition would have been for ever hopeless. But, blessed be God, he did interpose, in sending Christ to purge our sins. "I saw the Lord" says the prophet, "sitting on a throne, high and lifted up...and one (seraph) cried unto another and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts." Let us mark the effect of this vision on the prophet's mind. He cried, "woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." In these words the voice of conscience answers to the curse of the law. The law debar us, as sinners, from approaching the presence of the Holy One; and conscience, which testifies to our guilt, acknowledges the sentence to be just. But let us mark also, what the prophet goes on to tell. He says that a seraph came to him with "a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar;" he also laid it on his lips and said, "lo, this has touched thy lips, and *thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.*" The result of this taking away of iniquity and purgation of sin, was immediate and most blessed. The Lord proclaimed from his throne, "whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And the prophet, forgetting all his former terror, pressed to the foot of the burning throne exclaiming "here am I, send me."¹ Now what the seraph thus did for Isaiah, Christ the Saviour has done for us; He has taken away our iniquity, He has purged our sin. Bearing it in his own body on the tree, He has made full expiation for human guilt, so that man is now invited and welcomed to draw near to God again. Death indeed still reigns over the body; but to those who come to God by him, there is the promise of resurrection out of it, the promise also of life in the presence of God for ever. And these inestimable, these priceless benefits are brought near to all men. For the Father, having by the Son reconciled the world, declares himself accessible to all, and his "free gift," as St. Paul witnesses, "has come on all

¹ Isaiah vi.

men, to justification of life.”¹ Let us then seek to apprehend and let us thankfully receive this great salvation. Our experience shall be that of the prophet—we shall be delivered from the spirit of bondage, and draw nigh to God with confidence, crying Abba Father.

It greatly enhances the grace of Christ our Saviour, that this purgation of sin was “by Himself.” He did not send an angel to suffer for us: He came himself. In the touching and beautiful language of St. Peter, “*his own self* bare our sins *in his own body* on the tree.”²

We are taught however, much more by this expression. It rebukes the Romanist, who seeks, by his self-inflicted penances to make atonement for his sins, by telling him that the only penance which God exacts, has already been endured. The groans of Calvary were the penance: “*by himself*” he purged our sins. It also rebukes those who say that Christ has purged original sin, but that we must look to our repentance, faith and reformation for the expiation of actual transgression. Christ “*by himself*” has purged “*our sins*,” original and actual. As he bowed his sacred head in death, he said, “it is finished.” And in token that it was so—that sin was indeed purged, that God was accessible as a reconciled father, and that there was no more any condemnation to those who trusted in his perfect sacrifice, “the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”³

Jesus, having accomplished this work of mercy, “sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” Here is dignity as well as grace. The dignity we shall consider hereafter. The grace is manifest; He has taken that seat for our sakes, as our living Mediator; that we may come to God. We shrink from approaching the presence of the heavenly majesty. But he tells us that he is there, to embolden us to come. And when we come, we are greeted with his gracious smile; it awaits us as our welcome, and fills our hearts with joy. No prophet was a minister of grace like this. No prophet could say, listen to my word; I have purged your sins, I am your way to God, I am your great

¹ Romans v. 18. ² I Peter ii. 24. ³ John xix. 30; Matt. xxvii. 50, 51.

salvation. But Christ can say so; yea, Christ does say so. Whether we think then of his dignity or of his grace, let us hearken to him; One so exalted and so gracious should never speak in vain.

And let us consider our circumstances. They differ most materially from the circumstances of those who have preceded us, to whom, in past ages, God spake. We are not under the dispensation of promise or of covenant; we are not under the patriarchal dispensation; we have nothing to do with the types and shadows of Moses. God has provided some better thing for us. He has given to us the fulfilment of promise, covenant, and sacrament, the substance of figure, type, and shadow, in Jesus Christ revealed. We are under the fifth and last dispensation of the world—the dispensation of sin purged, the veil rent, and God accessible through a living Mediator. Hardness of heart is now the only interposing barrier between any human being and the bosom of eternal love. We must not suppose that faith in these things is that which makes them true. They are true, and continue true, whether we believe them or not. All God's expostulations with us, all his warnings and entreaties, proceed on His perfect knowledge of their truth. If believed, they are our salvation; if neglected and disbelieved, they are our deeper condemnation. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words," says the Saviour, "hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."¹ May God therefore grant us grace!

¹ John xii. 48.

(See Appendix, Note A.)

LECTURE II.

Hebrews i. 4—7.

"Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire."

In the opening verses of this epistle, St. Paul has demonstrated Christ's immeasurable superiority to the prophets, and has declared that he is sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high. In the verses now before us, he prefers him to the angels also, and tells us why God the Father has desired him to take that seat.

Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

If we attentively consider these words, we shall find that three distinct ideas are contained in them. Christ is declared to be made better than the angels. We have the measure of this superiority: His dignity is as much superior to theirs, as his name is more excellent than theirs. This excellent name has been obtained by inheritance.

As the lowly Jesus of Nazareth, "that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man," Christ was for a

season humbled beneath the angels. But, "for the suffering of that death, he was crowned with glory and honour;"¹ for when he ascended on high, having purged our sins, He took his seat, by the Father's command, on the right hand of the heavenly Majesty.* In being bidden to sit there, he was "made better than the angels;" for no angel ever shall, ever can sit in that seat of honour. The place which they occupy is as far inferior as their names are inferior to his excellent name. The excellence of the name declares the dignity of the seat: the name is that of Son, the seat that of equality with the Father. And this excellent name, entitling to this honoured seat, is his "*by inheritance*." This is exceedingly important. For when you seek to prove the Godhead of Christ by alleging the names of honour given to him, men turn aside the argument by saying that God has conferred these as the reward of merit. But inheritance is not merit. He who, for worthy deeds, has been ennobled by his king and country, cannot be said to have inherited his honours; he has earned them. His son inherits them, for to him they appertain by birthright. Now Christ has not earned his excellent name; it is His by inheritance. God did not adopt him and call him Son, as the reward of merit; the name belongs to him as the begotten of the Father. God may indeed heap mercy and honour on the creature. But the question may still be asked, "what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" And the creature is constrained to answer, I have nothing. Not such is the answer of Christ. He took that glorious seat on the right hand of God, and took it as his own: "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God."²

This excellent name of Christ belongs, as we have seen, to himself only. St. Paul proceeds,—

For to which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. AND WHEN HE BRINGETH IN AGAIN THE FIRST-BEGOTTEN INTO THE

¹ Heb. ii. 9.

² Heb. i. 3, 13.

³ Philp. ii. 5.

HABITABLE EARTH *he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And unto the angels he saith, (this, even He) Who maketh his angels WINDS, and his ministers a flame of fire.*

Nothing can more strongly mark, than do these verses, the difference between angels and Christ—the different relation in which God stands to him from that in which he stands to them. To NONE OF THEM did he ever say, thou art my son; to ALL OF THEM he saith, worship him. He is the Son begotten; they are creatures made: the Father begat him; the Creator called them into being. Excellent they may be, but the creature is nothing in its best estate. This will appear in a very striking way, if we turn to the Psalm from which the words of the seventh verse are a quotation. It celebrates God as the great God, the God of honour and majesty. It speaks of him as stretching out the heavens like a curtain; as making his angels winds, his ministers a flaming fire; as laying the foundations of the earth, as setting a bound to the sea. It tells us how he sends the springs into the valleys; how his goodness provides for every beast of the field, and causes the fowls of the air to sing; how he makes grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man.¹ The same God then created the angels, the cattle, the fowls, and the blades of grass. They all owe their existence to his omnipotent word: He spake and it was done; He commanded, and the creature sprang into being. We cannot conceive a greater contrast than between Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and the insect that crawls upon the ground. But Gabriel, and “the poor beetle which we tread upon,” belong to one class, one category: they are both *things made*, they are *fellow-creatures*. How vast is the difference when we ascend to Christ! It is a difference not in degree, but in kind; the *maker* of angels saith to Jesus, I have *begotten* thee. An illustration may set this before us in something of its vivid reality. Man cannot create, but he can *make* many things; and his works are wonderful exhibitions of the wisdom, skill and ability which

¹ Psalm civ. 1—14.

God his Creator has bestowed upon him. He has also power to *beget*, in his own likeness, of his own substance; and in this respect, as well as in others, he is made in the image of God. We pay a visit to an ingenious artist. He is surrounded by specimens of his professional ability and skill: his children also are standing beside their father. We examine and admire the creations of the artist's fancy; and turning to him we ask, which do you value, these, or the children who stand beside you? Who can doubt his reply? Do you compare, he answers, *the things which I made with my hands, with the children begotten of my body?* I made these things, and could make many like them at my pleasure; but my children are *my flesh and bone, my own substance, a part of myself*. This illustration from earthly things sets forth, though faintly and unworthily, the truth of heavenly things. Let us take all the host of heaven, from the Archangel Gabriel, the loftiest created intelligence, down to the lowest of those shining ones who do the Almighty's bidding, and wait to fulfil his word. Let us then visit the worlds that roll in space. Let us next descend upon the earth, and take the great and good of all generations of mankind—the sages, the legislators in whom nations have gloried, and for the honour of whose birth-place cities have disputed. And having thus gathered from universal nature all that is good, excellent, and glorious, let us place them before the Lord on the one hand, and Christ alone on the other. These, says the Eternal, pointing to the illustrious company which we have gathered before him,—these I made, and having made, I could annihilate. And were they now annihilated, millions of creatures as excellent would spring into being at the word of my mouth. But of the Son he says,—*MY BEGOTTEN, PARTAKER OF MY SUBSTANCE, SHARER OF MY DIVINITY, ETERNITY, AND GLORY*. Comparison with Christ then is impious, as it is with Jehovah Himself. *The made* and *the begotten* in fact admit not of comparison; there is no likeness between them.

And here I cannot but bear my feeble testimony to the excellence of those admirable creeds which our venerable

Church has sanctioned and adopted. I refer especially to the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. On the subject of which we are speaking now, their statements are truth in its purest form, distilled without mixture, from the fountain of truth. "I believe" says the Nicene Creed, "in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, *begotten not made; being of one substance with the Father*, By whom all things were made." Let us listen to the kindred statements of the Athanasian. It tells us that "such as the Father is, such is the Son...the Father uncreate, the Son uncreate...the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible...the Father eternal, the Son eternal." It tells us again, that "the Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten;" and that "the Son is of the Father alone, *not made, nor created, but begotten.*" It is impossible to conceive any thing truer than these statements; they are *truth itself*. The false liberality of a freethinking age has accused our venerable Church of bigotry, because she puts these statements into the mouths of her children as confessions of the true faith, and has also fenced this true faith with anathemas, declaring that those who keep it not on this and all points, whole and undefiled, shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly. But the calling of Christ's Church in the world is to bear witness for his truth; and in denouncing those who depart from, or corrupt it, she only follows the example set her by the apostles of her Lord. "Though we, or an angel from heaven," says St. Paul, "preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed.*"¹ Now the dignity and glory of the Redeemer's person are the very substance of that gospel about which St. Paul was so zealous. If they are taken away, the Saviour is taken away, and there is no gospel left. Well therefore has the Church of England done to sanction that creed which sets forth these mysteries so largely, and warns so faithfully those who pervert them, that they do so at the peril of damnation. Christ long maintain her in this glorious witness for His name!

¹ Galat. i. 8.

We have seen that to be begotten implies unity of substance. The begotten of the human is human; the begotten of the Divine is Divine. If further proof of this were wanting, we have it in the sixth verse. It refers to the Saviour's second coming,—“when he bringeth in again the first-begotten into the habitable earth, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him.” St. Paul has told us, in the fourth verse, of the honour already conferred on Christ. At his ascension, says the apostle, he was made better than the angels, being seated on the right hand of the throne. This honour, as we gather from the fifth verse, belongs to him as the Son begotten. And in further proof of his dignity as such, another honour is awaiting him. When the Father brings him into the habitable earth, the second time, he shall propose him as the object of manifested worship and adoration to those very angels above whom he is sitting now. Let us turn to the Psalm from which these words are a quotation. It reveals Christ in all his glory. “The Lord reigneth,” is its sublime commencement, “let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad. Clouds and darkness are round about him...a fire goeth before him and burneth up his enemies...his lightnings enlightened the world...the hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.” It pours contempt on idol worship, and points to the true object of adoration—“WORSHIP HIM, ALL YE GODS.”¹ Now this glorious Psalm contains, according to the text, the words of God the Father: let us therefore reverently examine it. We recognize Divinity in the name here given to Christ. For the literal rendering of the first verse is JEHOVAH reigneth; and Jehovah is the incommunicable name of God. We recognize it also in the accompaniments of the Saviour's advent—in the clouds and darkness that are round about him—in the fire that goeth before him and burneth up his enemies—in the lightnings that enlighten the world—in the melting of the hills like wax. And finally, we recognize it in the challenge here sent forth, in the claim of worship and adoration from the

¹ Psalm xcvii. 1—7.

worthiest of God's creatures here made on the Saviour's behalf. To offer worship to a creature, is blasphemy. He who claims worship and receives it, must indeed be truly God.

Let us sum up, then, in one word, the doctrine of the Scripture before us. We learn from it that Jesus our Saviour, in virtue of his name of Son, is now sitting above cherubim and seraphim. We learn from it, that when he comes again, we shall behold, in virtue of the same name, cherub and seraph adoring at his feet.

But here a question of the utmost importance occurs, and we pervert instead of expounding this precious Scripture, unless we give a true and sound reply to it. If the seat on the right hand of the Father's majesty, is Christ's own seat; if the name of Son is his by inheritance; if to receive Divine worship is his native prerogative, why does St. Paul speak of these things as conferred? Why does he say in the text, that having purged our sins, Christ *was made* better than the angels; and in another Scripture, that "*for the suffering of death*" he was "crowned with glory and honour;"¹ and in another, that *because* he was obedient unto death, "God hath highly exalted him?"² The reason is obvious. St. Paul in the text, and in these other Scriptures, is not speaking of Christ merely as the Son of God; and it is not his object to set forth to us the dignity of his Divine person only. He is speaking of him as the God-man, the risen Mediator between God and men; and he designs to set forth to us the superangelic glory which has been conferred on him in that exalted character. As the Son of God, Christ was infinitely glorious, and possessed all from everlasting. But "he who was rich, for our sakes became poor:"³ he descended into the poverty of our nature that he might purge our sins. This voluntary abasement, and voluntary poverty made it possible for him to receive; and he has received his honours and riches back again. For when he had purged our sins, the Father raised him from the dead and bade him re-ascend to his native skies. And he did re-ascend, taking

¹ Heb. ii. 9.² Phil. ii. 8, 9.³ II Cor. viii. 9.

his manhood with him, and sitting down in our humanity on the right hand of the eternal throne. There he is installed as Mediator; there the Son of God and man is owned as the Father's begotten, and claims also, and receives the worship of the host of heaven. For in his holy nativity, resurrection and ascension, manhood has been taken into God, and through eternal union with his Divine person, partakes of the majesty and glory of God.

Did Christ then, it may be asked, lay down his native honours, only that he might assume them again? No; he assumed them again *with interest*. He left the skies, and after a season returned to them; but he returned not as he left them. He left them, the Son of God; he returned, the Son of God and Man. Love to us prompted him to leave them. The honour and dignity which had been his from everlasting would have remained with him for ever. But he must have enjoyed them alone, for we could not have been partakers with him; we must have continued in our guilt and dishonour, our head must have remained in the dust. Now however, by his precious sacrifice, our sin is purged. He has also risen again and ascended on high, our Mediator and Advocate. And manhood having been in his person raised to the throne of God, a way has been opened for the eternal exaltation of his people. The corn of wheat has fallen into the ground and died, and by dying has brought forth abundant fruit.¹

That it is indeed of Christ as risen Mediator, St. Paul is speaking in the words before us, is evident from the preceding context. It is evident also from the three texts here cited, which are all declarations of the Father concerning Christ. The first is, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." These words occur in the second Psalm, and were spoken when the heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing against the Lord, and against his anointed. And this took place, as we know from infallible authority, when Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to crucify

¹ John xii. 24.

and slay our blessed Lord.¹ They did crucify and slay him, but the Father raised him from the dead. He also hailed him, as he rose again, in the very words before us—"Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."² "*This day*" then, was the day of his resurrection, the day when the Mediator, Son alike of God and man, was owned as God's begotten. The second text referred to, occurs in the second book of Samuel. God says to David, "I will set up thy seed after thee which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom; *I will be his Father and he shall be my Son.*"³ Now this son of David, who was thus to be owned as Son of God, is none else than Christ. For St. Peter tells us, in reference to this very promise, that "God had sworn to David, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, *he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.*" And it is needless to say that this promise respects him as Mediator. His humanity appears in it too plainly to be overlooked: he is spoken of as David's Son, proceeding out of David's bowels. And it respects him as the risen Mediator; for St. Peter adds, that David, "seeing this before, spake of *the resurrection of Christ.*"⁴ The third text referred to occurs, as we saw already, in the ninety-seventh Psalm. St. Paul, in introducing it, calls Christ "the first-begotten." This at once declares that he is speaking of him as the risen Mediator. For this name belongs to him through resurrection: he is "the first-begotten of the dead."⁵ Besides, in that Psalm Christ is celebrated as Lord of heaven and earth. And this lordship belongs to the Mediator, Son of God and man. "I saw in the night-visions," says the prophet, "and behold one like *the Son of Man* came with the clouds of heaven: and there was given him dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."⁶ Such then, are the honours, the glories of Christ our Saviour. He sits now

¹ Acts iv. 24—28.² Acts xiii. 33.³ Sam. vii. 12—14.⁴ Acts ii. 30, 31.⁵ Rev. i. 5.⁶ Dan. vii. 13, 14.

above angels, and is owned as the Father's begotten: he shall receive, when he comes again, in the sight of assembled worlds, angelic worship and adoration. These honours are the purchase of his work, but they prove his person to be Divine. For they are Divine honours, and could not have been granted to any to whom they appertained not by birthright. To him, as we have already seen, they do thus appertain. "Glorify thou me with thine own self," was the language of his prayer to be exalted to them, "*with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*"¹ That prayer has found its answer in the Mediator's exalted seat, in the Mediator's excellent name—a seat and a name which are his by purchase—a seat and a name which are also his "by inheritance."

The Hebrews gloried in their law: it had been "ordained by angels." Receive then the gospel, says St. Paul, for the Mediator of the gospel is better than angels. Your own Scriptures tell you so. They tell you that as the begotten Son, he is now preferred to angels; they tell you that hereafter you shall see angels adoring at his feet.

We are not Hebrews, but these things concern us equally. Let us contemplate with solemn awe what has been now set forth to us of the Saviour's glory. Ezekiel had a vision of it when he saw the cherubim by the river Chebar. "And above the firmament that was over their heads," he says, "was the likeness of a throne, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord; and when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one that spake."² Jesus is that man whose appearance Ezekiel saw—that man whose likeness is the likeness of the glory of the Lord. His throne is above the cherubim, and from that throne we hear, as the prophet did, the voice of one that speaks. For all the promises of the gospel, its invitations, expostulations,

¹ John xvii. 5.² Ezek. i. 26—28.

and entreaties, proceed from that place of light inaccessible, where he who is "made better than angels" now sits on high. Let us follow the example of the prophet, let us fall on our faces to hear. But, blessed be God, the glory which he saw, was "the appearance of the bow in the cloud in the day of rain"—the appearance of the cheering rainbow, the sign of God's covenant of peace. Glorious though he be who speaks to us in the gospel, he is the same who purged our sins; and his words are peace. God give us grace to hear Him while it is called to-day!

LECTURE III.

Hebrews i. 8, 9.

“But unto the Son, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

IN these verses St. Paul pursues his theme. It will help us to perceive the force of his reasoning, if we read in connection, the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses. “And when he again bringeth in the first-begotten into the habitable earth, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him; and to the angels he saith *this, even he* who maketh his angels *as the* winds, and his ministers *as a* flame of fire; but unto the Son, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” Let us mark the force of this contrast. The things contrasted are the words addressed to angels, and those addressed to the Son. Angels are addressed as creatures and commanded to worship another: the Son is addressed as God, the receiver, the object of worship. Not a word is said in disparagement of angels, but quite the contrary. We are given to understand, that in executing the Almighty’s will they are swift as the winds, and, to use the words of an eloquent writer, “leave the lightnings lagging far behind.” But this intimates, only more strongly, the excellence and glory of Christ. For we cannot help exclaiming—how exalted then, how glorious must he be whom even these excellent spirits are commanded to fall down and worship!

Having thus observed the connection of the text with the verses which precede it, let us consider it more particularly, as a continuation of the apostle's argument. The two verses of which it consists, are a citation from the forty-fifth Psalm, and contain a two-fold testimony—a testimony, *first*, to Christ's original, and, *second*, to his mediatorial dignity. We shall take them in order.

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, oh God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

Three things are mentioned in this Scripture. It speaks of an eternal throne; it speaks of a sceptre of righteousness; it tells us that he who shall occupy that throne and wield that sceptre is a Divine person. That throne shall be set up at the blessed era for which all creation waits, when the Father brings again the first-begotten into the world. This is evident from the contrast already intimated between the sixth and eighth verses. For the worshipping angels, and the worshipped Son, are addressed by the Father at the same instant. It is evident also, from the words of Christ. "When the Son of Man," he tells us, "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; THEN shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."¹ Then also shall he sway his righteous sceptre over a righteous world. For his people shall be "all righteous," yea "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of his glory, as the waters cover the sea." And the devil, who now deceives the nations, being cast then into the bottomless pit, there shall be nothing to hurt nor offend in all God's holy mountain. This leads me to notice the remarkable connection of the three first petitions of the Lord's Prayer. They shall all be fulfilled together; the accomplishment of one, implies the accomplishment of the rest. The second petition, "thy kingdom come," asks for the establishment of that very throne of which we are now speaking, and for the appearing of him who is destined to wield that sceptre. The text declares it to be a sceptre of

¹ Matt. xxv. 31.

righteousness. When he appears therefore in answer to this petition, the first and third petitions shall be answered likewise. The Father's name shall then be hallowed from sea to sea, and shore to shore. The Father's will shall also then be done—done on earth, as it is now done in heaven—done universally, perfectly, and constantly. But the principal object of St. Paul in adducing this quotation, was to prove to the Hebrews, from their own Scriptures, that this throne and sceptre of righteousness are designed for a Divine person. And he proves it by the manner of the Father's address to him, "thy throne, *O God*." It is true that the name "God" is often given in a lower sense. But parallel Scriptures make it evident that in this place it is not so intended. The ninety-sixth and ninety-eighth Psalms are both parallel to the forty-fifth. They speak of one who comes as universal Judge and King, and call upon the earth to make a joyful noise before him; they describe his rule as one of righteousness, equity and truth; they declare him to be the Lord Jehovah. Now there are not two kings, neither are there two sceptres. He then, whom the Father addresses in the Psalm before us, is none else than the Lord Jehovah, God indeed.

But St. Paul, in his present argument, is not speaking of Christ merely as the Son of God; he is speaking of him, as we saw in the last lecture, as the risen Mediator, the Son of God and man. And his object is to shew not merely that he is a Divine person, but that in that sacred character of Mediator he has been exalted above all, whether men or angels, who have borne the commission of the Eternal. The quotation is therefore continued,—

Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

To one who does not perceive the object of the argument, and who is unacquainted with the mystery of Christ's person, this verse must appear to contradict that which has preceded

it. For while the former verse speaks of him as God, that which we have just read speaks of his personal worthiness, and tells us that for that worthiness he has been rewarded *by God, even his God*. But the apparent contradiction vanishes in a moment, if we only bear in mind that the Psalmist, and the Apostle after him, are speaking of the God-man Mediator. For he who is "God of God," as our admirable creed teaches, "for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." One purpose of this act of condescension was shewn in the last lecture—he stooped thus low that he might save and exalt his people. And the words which we have just read suggest another. The eternal throne of which the former verse makes mention, belongs *by right* to him who is "God of God." But he laid aside his glory for a season, and clothed in our humble flesh, he obeyed and suffered all the Father's will. And we learn from the words before us that having thus proved his personal worthiness, he shall be called to that throne *as the reward of merit*. And so, when the kingdom comes, he shall reign by a double claim—as the Father's Son, to whom it appertains by birth—as the Son of God and man, the worthiest of the worthy. For the purpose of incarnation was not merely to save man; it was to demonstrate also the excellence of Christ the Saviour. It was to reveal his perfect moral beauty, and to constrain universal creation with one voice to proclaim,—"**WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN.**"¹

Let us enter more particularly on the consideration of the verse before us. There are three things set forth in it. I. Christ is spoken of as having loved righteousness and hated iniquity. II. We are told that in acknowledgment of this perfect goodness he has been anointed by his God, with the oil of gladness. III. It is intimated that this anointing of glory and of joy has exalted him above his fellows.

I. The essence of righteousness is supreme love to God, and perfect love to man. Such love is the substance of God's

¹ Revel. v. 11—14.

law, and his law is the standard of righteousness. The text declares that Jesus loved this righteousness. And whether we turn to the Book of Psalms, which contains the secret breathings of his soul, or to the record which the evangelists have left of his life, behaviour and conversation, we shall find this testimony abundantly confirmed. "Oh how love I thy law," is his language, "it is my meditation all the day." And again he says, "how sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." And again, "mine eyes prevent the night-watches that I might meditate in thy word."¹ Let us listen to his expressions of love to the Father—deep, devoted, grateful love. "I will love thee," he exclaims "oh Lord my strength."² And again, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications."³ And again, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth."⁴ And again, "Oh Lord my God, I will give thanks to thee for ever."⁵ And thus, as he himself declares, God's law was within his heart,⁶ for on the innermost tablets of that heart the love of the Father was indelibly engraved. But it was not confined to the heart; his whole life declared it. Love to God will always shew itself in obedience to his will, in self-forgetfulness, in devotion to his glory. These are love's genuine fruits, and they were eminently seen in Jesus. He obeyed universally, constantly, and perfectly, in the most difficult circumstances, and under the most accumulated trials. And his obedience knew no limit: he "was obedient *unto death, even the death of the cross.*"⁷ For he forgot himself that he might seek the Father's glory. When hunger, thirst, and weariness pressed on him at once, he was unconscious of their pressure; "my meat," he said, "is to do the will of him that sent me."⁸ When the darkness of the cross began to gather round him, and the prayer, "Father, save me from this hour," would have relieved his troubled soul, we hear him rather asking, "Father, glorify thy name."⁹ We know how

¹ Ps. cxix. 97, 103, 148.⁴ Ps. xxxiv. 1.⁷ Philip. ii. 8.² Ps. xviii. 1.⁵ Ps. xxx. 12.⁸ John iv. 34.³ Ps. cxvi. 1.⁶ Ps. xl. 8.⁹ John xii. 27, 28.

his soul shrunk from that last dreadful hour—shrunk from drinking the cup of bitterness. But it was the cup which his Father had given to him,¹ and all-prevailing love made him stretch out his willing hand. For he lived, he died, that the Father might be glorified. And if he thus supremely loved the Lord his God, he also, and that perfectly, loved his neighbour. Nor was this love inactive. He lived that man might be blessed, for his work on earth was doing good; he died that man might be saved. I need not say that this love was without a cause. It was love in return for hatred: love under the most accumulated provocations: love unto death to those by whose hands he died: love which spent its last breath in seeking the pardon of its murderers. And if righteousness be the law of love, then Jesus “loved righteousness.” The *intensity* with which he loved it, is expressed in the text, by the negative phrase, “and hated iniquity.” This is an idiom very common in the original. We read, for example, that the Pharisees sent to the Baptist, to inquire who he was, and that “he confessed *and denied not*, but confessed, I am not the Christ.”² The phrase, “and denied not,” expresses the intensity of St. John’s confession that the honour of the Christ belonged not to him. And so it is with the words before us: they express the intensity with which the soul of the Saviour clave to his Father’s holy law. Of that intensity the cross was the measure. For his love to the Father and desire for the Father’s glory, his love to man and desire for man’s salvation, were both revealed in all their fulness in the cross. It was proclaimed on Calvary that the love which Jesus bare to God and man, and the desire for God’s glory and man’s salvation which filled and animated his breast, were affections strong as death. The same cross gives us the measure of his hatred to iniquity. He provoked his enemies to nail him there by testifying of the world that the deeds thereof were evil.³ And he gave himself willingly to that shameful death, that he might take away sin. “He bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” says St. Peter, “*that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.*”⁴

¹ John xviii. 11. ² John i. 19, 20. ³ John vii. 7. ⁴ I Pet. ii. 24.

"He gave himself for us," says St. Paul, "*that he might redeem us from all iniquity*, and purify unto himself a peculiar people."¹ His hatred of iniquity then was as his love of righteousness. The cross revealed them both, and revealed them to be strong as death. Such was the character of our Saviour; of him on whom God pronounces the blessed eulogium of the text.

II. God never commends without rewarding. The text proceeds, "therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness." This anointing is yet to come. Jesus was anointed by the Father when he came up out of the waters of Jordan; but that anointing was not "with the oil of gladness." It sent him forth, indeed, to preach glad tidings to others, and to comfort all that mourned,² but it was to himself an introduction to grief and sorrow—grief and sorrow which ended only in the grave. He may be said to have been anointed with gladness when he was raised out of the grave, and being exalted to the right hand of God, received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost. But neither is that the anointing here referred to; for the Saviour's cup of joy was not filled then, nay it is not, even now. He still waits for the ingathering of his people and the establishment of his eternal throne. *Then* shall he be anointed with this holy oil: *then*, to use the language of the Canticles, we shall "behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him, in the day of his espousals and in the day of *the gladness of his heart*."³ A due consideration of the text and of the connection of its parts, proves this interpretation to be just. The Psalm from which St. Paul is here quoting, is from beginning to end, a prophecy of this glorious day: it describes the King, proclaims his advent, and speaks of the ingathering of his people. Moreover, in the first verse of our text, the verse immediately preceding that which we are now considering, there is mention made of the eternal throne and of the sceptre of righteousness attached to it. Nothing therefore, can be more obvious than that the Psalmist, in the verse before us, is

¹ Titus II. 14.² Isaiah lxi. 1—3.³ Cantic. III. 11.

describing what he was seeing at the moment, with a prophet's eye. He sees the Saviour already seated on that throne, and that sceptre already placed by God the Father in his most worthy hand. And contemplating the majesty of the crowned and sceptred King, he exclaims in holy rapture, "God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness." As Jesus shall in that day himself acknowledge, saying before assembled worlds, "Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over."

He who shall anoint the Saviour's sacred head with this oil of gladness, is called, in the text, "God even thy God." The Father is the God of Jesus. He is the God whom Jesus loved and served; the God for whose glory Jesus lived and died. He promised to his holy child the mercy of resurrection, glory and a kingdom, as the reward of his finished work. And steadfast confidence in these gracious promises sustained our Saviour in all the trials of his life, and carried him victorious and triumphant through the untold horrors of his death. They have already had a partial fulfilment; but the coming day of glory shall witness their complete accomplishment. This accomplishment shall be, as St. Paul teaches, "to the glory of God the Father."¹ It shall reveal him to Creation as the faithful and the true; the God who promises that he may fulfil; who knows indeed how to exact obedience, but knows also how to observe it when rendered to him, that he may eternally requite it.

But on the subject of Christ's reward, something yet remains to be said. God will not give dominion and rule to the unworthy; he who will not govern for the glory of God and the blessedness of the creature, cannot be trusted with power. God will give it to Christ, because Christ is worthy. The same word which speaks of his throne as eternal, speaks of his sceptre as a sceptre of righteousness. What proof has Christ given that it shall be so? His life and death in our nature are the proof. The cross proclaims his qualifications for empire. He who so loved God that for his glory he was content to die, may well be trusted to govern for that

¹ Philp. ii. 11.

glory. And he who so loved man that he gave himself for man's salvation, may well be trusted with dominion over man; his rule will be exercised in equity and truth. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, *therefore* God, even thy God hath anointed thee."

This brings us again, to what has been mentioned already, but is now explained more fully. I refer to the glorious subject of Christ's double claim to empire—his claim of merit superadded to his claim of right—his claim as the Lamb slain, as well as the Son begotten. These claims are not subversive of each other; you cannot pay a more flattering tribute of homage to an earthly king than to say that the splendour of his actions eclipses the lustre of his birth. History tells us of a sovereign of whom this was eminently true. He left, for a season, his *hereditary* throne, and veiling his regal dignity in a humble garb, he wrought with his hands as a common artisan. He did this that he might civilize his people, improve them in the arts of life, and raise them in the scale of nations. And when, having done it, he returned to his dominions and re-assumed his native honours, all Europe with one voice, proclaimed that Peter the Great of Russia was worthy to be a king. And so, if we may be allowed to illustrate heavenly things by earthly, the Son of the blessed God left for a season his native glories, and veiling his royal majesty in the weeds of mortal flesh, laboured and travailed and died on this wretched earth. He did this to redeem from death and destruction fallen millions of Adam's family, to raise them to the sonship of God, to teach them his holy fear and service, and to prepare them for the inheritance of his glory. He has now finished his work of suffering, and the heavens have received him for a while. But he shall come forth again to take the throne prepared for him. And as he ascends that throne, and receives his crown and sceptre, the people who have been saved by him from destruction, shall proclaim his worthy deeds and hail him as their King. They do not forget that he is the Son of God; but his love and wondrous death on their behalf, are the burden of their praise. "THOU ART WORTHY," they

sing, "to take the book and to open the seals thereof, FOR THOU WAST SLAIN, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD."¹ *

III. We have yet to consider the concluding words of the text, "above thy fellows." The Hebrews clung fondly to that dispensation, which having been at first "ordained by angels," had been borne witness to, in the successive generations of its continuance, by inspired prophets. But St. Paul proves to them, in these words, from their own Scriptures, that though prophets and angels, as having borne along with him God's high commission, were in one sense Messiah's "fellows," they all took rank beneath him. He proves to them that when the eternal throne of which mention has just been made, shall be set up, and when Christ shall take his righteous sceptre in his hand, angels of every rank, and prophets of every name shall be the willing subjects of that throne, and shall bow before that sceptre. The argument is perfect: a Hebrew was constrained either to reject the testimony of his own Scriptures, or to submit to it without cavil. But I should be sorry to dismiss these precious words with so brief a notice. If they are convincing on the one hand, they are full of consolation on the other. If they prove, that Christ is exalted above all who have been associated with him in the service of God, they prove also, that God will bestow on all such, a measure of his anointing of gladness. The humblest believer may then lift up his head and look for his eternal reward; he is a fellow or associate of his Lord in the holy service of the Father. It is not

¹ Revelations v. 9.

* This illustration has been vehemently objected to, on account of the moral character of the famous Russian Autocrat. What then shall we say to the following: "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and to return?" (Luke xix. 12) Commentators tell us that our Lord was referring in these words to the then recent visit of Archelaus to Rome, to receive investiture from the hands of Augustus. If this is really so, the matter is settled. Peter the Great contrasts most favourably with the cruel and licentious son of Herod. And if his journey to the seat of power, and his return when invested with the diadem, was deemed by our Lord and Saviour a fitting illustration of one heavenly mystery, the wondrous act of the Russian Autocrat is equally suitable as the illustration of another.

too much to say so ; true Christians *are indeed* Christ's fellows. The same spirit which rested on him, rests on them also. "He that is joined to the Lord," says St. Paul, "is one spirit."¹ And again he tells us, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."² They are sustained by the same faith in the same God and Father. "Go to my brethren," said Jesus, "and say unto them, I ascend to *my* Father and *your* Father, and to *my* God and *your* God."³ Their hearts are filled with the same love and animated by the same spirit of obedience. "He stretched forth his hand," says St. Matthew, "towards his disciples and said, behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever," added that blessed one, "shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother."⁴ They tread the same path. He hath left us "an example," says St. Peter, "that ye should follow his steps :"⁵ "be ye followers of me," says St. Paul, "even as I also am of Christ."⁶ And finally, they are cheered on their way by the prospect of the same glory. Our blessed Lord and Master looked through present darkness and sorrow to the brightness and joy beyond the grave. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life," he said, "in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."⁷ And St. Paul, when cold and desolate in the damp Roman prison, and expecting daily to be led forth to die, could say in like manner, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."⁸ Such are true Christians. They are associated with Christ in character now, they shall be associated in glory hereafter. He who is Christ's God and their God also, will not leave them unrewarded in the day of Christ's reward. They are "heirs of God, and *joint-heirs with Christ*."⁹ The oil of gladness which shall be poured on his head, shall descend on their heads also ; they shall share with him in his throne, his sceptre and his crown. "To him that overcometh, will

¹ I Cor. vi. 17.² Rom. viii. 9.³ John xx. 17.⁴ Matt. xli. 49, 50.⁵ I Peter ii. 21.⁶ I Cor. xi. 1.⁷ Ps. xvi. 11.⁸ II Tim. iv. 8.⁹ Rom. viii. 17.

I grant," he says, "*to sit with me in my throne.*"¹ "I saw a great white throne," says the beloved Apostle, "and HIM THAT SAT ON IT."—"I saw thrones and THEY SAT on them."² Moreover the same seer tells us that he was caught up into heaven, and that "a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And round about the throne," he adds, "were four and twenty thrones, and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, and they had on their heads *crowns of gold.*"³ These quotations set before us at once the promise and its fulfilment; the fulfilment was seen by the seer in prophetic vision. And as he saw, so, blessed be God, shall it be. Those who have followed Christ now, in loving righteousness and hating iniquity, in loving God and living for his glory, in loving man and seeking his salvation, shall be entrusted, under Christ hereafter, with rule, government and power. And being so entrusted, they shall govern for God's glory for ever, and rule his creatures in justice, equity and truth.

Let us pause, and consider these things. The portion which we have in this miserable, dying world, is not for an instant to be compared with the portion which God sets before us, in calling us to share in Christ's eternal joy. And we may share in it, if we will; we may partake with Christ as truly as he partook with us. For "he who was rich, for our sakes became poor, *that we, through his poverty, might be rich.*"⁴ But there is only one path to glory, the path which he trod; and we must tread it also, if we would ever arrive there. He will enable us to tread it, if we only receive him as our Saviour; looking to his blood for our pardon, and to his Spirit for our strength. He will cleanse and sanctify our hearts, he will teach us to call his God our God, he will make us lovers and doers of righteousness, he will bring us to his heavenly kingdom. May the Lord incline us all thankfully to receive his mercy!

¹ Rev. iii. 21. ² Rev. xx. 11, 4. ³ Rev. iv. 2, 4, original. ⁴ II Cor. viii. 9.

(See Appendix, Note B.)

LECTURE IV.

Hebrews i. 10—12.

“And thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shall thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.”

THE principal object of the Apostle in his Scripture citations hitherto, has been to prove to the Hebrews the glory of Christ as Mediator. But apparently afraid lest they should construe the language employed into something derogatory to his Lord's supreme Divinity, he refers to the Old Testament again, in the words which we have now read. And these words are so plain as to put that matter out of question. For they speak of Christ as Jehovah, declare the works of Jehovah to be his, and ascribe to him omnipotence and immutability, Jehovah's incommunicable attributes.

Let us consider *first*, the name here given to Christ. Let us consider *second*, the works ascribed to him. And let us consider *third*, the attributes which are declared to belong to him.

I. Let us begin with the name.

And thou, Jehovah.

The word in our translation is "Lord;" but the Greek word which we render "Lord," is the translation of the Hebrew "Jehovah." St. Paul is here quoting from the hundred and second Psalm, which is a supplication addressed to Jehovah. The ancient Jews acknowledged that this Psalm referred to Messiah; and the argument founded on it must have been felt by the Hebrews as utterly unanswerable. There is moreover a climax in the argument. St. Paul had reminded them that in the second Psalm, Christ is called the begotten. But this might have appeared to some, a mere title of honour and reverence. He had therefore proceeded a step farther, and reminded them that in the forty-fifth Psalm, Christ is addressed as God. But that name is not of itself, decisive of divinity: "He called them gods," it is written, "to whom the word of God came."¹ He therefore proceeds a step farther yet, citing the Psalm before us, in which Christ is addressed as Jehovah. This is at once decisive. For if a Hebrew held anything as truth, it was the incommunicableness of that sacred name. An unbelieving Hebrew therefore, glorying in the dispensation ordained by angels, must have been perfectly silenced by this citation. For it proved the gospel dispensation to be better, by proving that Messiah its Mediator was the God of angels. And a believing Hebrew, whose views of the character and dignity of Christ were as yet but half formed and imperfect, and who feared to turn away from the dispensation of his fathers, must have been equally edified, comforted and strengthened by this testimony of the Scriptures of his fathers, to Messiah's glory. But we must not forget that St. Paul was writing for us also. And the testimony to Christ contained in the words here quoted by him, comes to us with double force. It comes as the testimony of the Old Testament, confirmed and established by the new. So that we are constrained either to abandon Scripture and follow reason, or to say of Jesus, with St. Thomas, "my Lord and my God."²

¹ John x. 35² John xx. 28.

II. But even were the name "Jehovah" not here given to Christ, the testimony of the text to his Godhead would be equally explicit, for it ascribes to him the work of creation.

And thou, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands.

That God and he only can create, is a truth self-evident. To speak of *the creature creating* is contrary to reason. And Scripture, which is ever in accordance with reason, uniformly ascribes this mighty work to God. "In the beginning," is its opening statement, "*God created the heavens and the earth.*"¹ It also ascribes to the Creator eternity and omnipotence, and declares that the work of creation manifests that omnipotence, and shews him to be God indeed. "Before the mountains were brought forth," is the sublime language of the Psalmist, "or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even *from everlasting to everlasting* thou art God."² The prophet is encouraged by the same consideration to address him as the Omnipotent. "Ah Lord God," he says, "thou hast made the heavens and the earth; *and there is nothing too hard for thee.*"³ And again, the Psalmist tells us that "the heavens declare the glory of God."⁴ Now the glory of God is his being manifested as God. And the heavens manifest him as such, because they proclaim to all who look upon them, that the hand which stretched them out is Omnipotent and Divine. Moreover, the creation of the heavens and the earth includes the creation of those who dwell in the heavens above, and on the earth beneath. These two acts are always in Scripture most expressly connected together, and ascribed to the same mighty agency. "O Lord my God," says the Psalmist, "thou art very great...who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain...*who maketh his angels winds.*"⁵ Thus saith God the Lord," says Isaiah, "he that spread forth the earth...*he*

¹ Gen. i. 1.

² Psalm xc. 2.

³ Jerem. xxxii. 17.

⁴ Psalm xix. 1.

⁵ Psalm civ. 1—4.

*that giveth breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein."*¹ And to the same purpose we read in Zechariah, "thus saith the Lord...who layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."² And consider what creation is. It is bringing all things out of nothing. "Things which are seen," says St. Paul, "were not made of things which do appear."³ The glorious intelligences of heaven, and the living inhabitants of earth, all owe their existence to God's mere word; "GOD SAID, Let there be light, and there was light."⁴ But this stupendous work of speaking non-entity into existence,—not material existence only, but living, intelligent, eternal existence, is in the text, expressly ascribed to Christ: "Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth," it says, "and the heavens are the works of thine hands." Between angels and Christ there can be no comparison. It were comparing the creature to Him who spake it into being.

II. But the Psalmist, as here quoted by St. Paul, not satisfied with ascribing Divine works to Christ, ascribes to him Divine attributes also. Having spoken of the works of nature he proceeds,—

They shall perish, but Thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

In these sublime words creation is contrasted with its Creator. It is exhibited in its frailty and mutability, subject to wax old, to be changed, to perish: He is exhibited in his omnipotence and immutability, folding up creation like a worn-out garment, and remaining himself the same, while he changes all things at his word. This comparison is rendered much more striking by the tenses here employed. We do not read, they shall perish, but thou *shalt remain*—they shall be changed, but thou *shalt be* the same. "They *shall* perish, but thou *remainest*," says the Psalmist; "they *shall be*

¹ Isaiah xlii. 5.² Zech. xii. 1.³ Heb. xi. 3.⁴ Gen. i. 3.

changed, but thou *art* the same." This remark is by no means trivial. The present tense is a form of speech always used of the Divine Being. It denotes that with him there is no *was* nor *shall be*, but an everlasting *am*, because he never alters. The creature, ever varying and mutable, has its past, its present, and its future. For the creature in itself is nothing; it has no existence of its own. To use the words of an eloquent writer, "it is but the shadow cast by Deity." A shadow tells that there is a substance: the shadow of a man on the wall tells that a man is passing by. But a shadow is nothing in itself. In like manner the creature tells that there is a God who made it, but he is the substance of which it is the shadow; it is nothing apart from him. He is the only EXISTENCE. When Moses asked his name that he might tell it to the children of Israel, he desired him to say, "I AM hath sent me unto you."¹ This is beautifully paraphrased, and the idea which I have just thrown out, of God as the substance and the creature as the shadow, is beautifully set forth to us in these lines of the Christian poet,—

"Tell them, I AM, Jehovah said
To Moses, while earth shook with dread;
And smitten to the heart
At once above, beneath, around
All nature without voice or sound
Replied, oh Lord, THOU ART."

What a view does this present to us of the majesty of the eternal God! Language can do no more to tell us what he is, and when it has done its utmost, it leaves us to worship, not to comprehend. But incomprehensible as is this majesty, it is the majesty of Christ our Saviour. It is of him that the text declares, that while the creature *shall* perish, he *remains*; that while the creature *shall* wax old, he *is* the same. This too, be it again remarked, is the testimony borne to him at once by the Old Testament and the New. And if this double testimony be insufficient to satisfy, let us hear his own. When the Jews asked him who he was, he took to himself that name which expresses

¹ Exodus iii. 14.

these Divine perfections—"before Abraham *was*" he said, "I AM"¹

But we must go a little deeper into the text, and inquire what are those changes of the creature, through which Christ the Creator remains the same. For we must not suppose, from the expression, "shall perish," that the heavens and earth are to be annihilated. St. Peter uses the same expression, in speaking of the heavens and earth before the flood: he says that they were overflowed with water and "perished." But his meaning is that they underwent a change. And that the same is the meaning of the expression before us, is manifest from the words that follow, "as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed." On the subject of this change let us refer to St. Peter again. He tells us, "that there shall come in the last days, scoffers... saying, where is the promise of his coming?...all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." To this impious scoff he answers that it is founded on a lie; that there has been a change, and that there shall be a change again. There was a change, he says, when the heavens and earth which had been in the days of Adam, passed away by water, in the days of Noah. And there shall be another change, he proceeds to say, when "the heavens and earth which are now," and have been since Noah's flood, pass away by fire in the dreadful day of the Lord. But shall they be destroyed utterly? Let St. Peter answer. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for *new heavens and a new earth*, wherein dwelleth righteousness."² There are three states then, of the heavens and earth. There were heavens and there was an earth from Adam to Noah; and these, at God's command, passed away by water. But the water did not destroy; the earth, at the same command, lifted its head again, and the heavens smiled once more. We dwell on that earth and underneath these heavens. But they also shall pass away, for they are "reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment." And then, out of the fire, at the command of the Eternal, as

¹ John viii. 58.

² II Peter iii. 3—13.

formerly out of the water, shall new heavens appear, and a new earth raise its head. On that new earth shall Jesus plant his throne, and under these new heavens shall he sway his righteous sceptre. In that new earth, as all the prophets witness, there shall be nothing to hurt nor offend, for it shall be filled with the knowledge of his glory, as the waters cover the sea. And from the rising of the sun, which performs its circuit in these new heavens, to the going down of the same, his name shall be exalted. Such are the changes of the creature. "But thou," says the Psalmist addressing Christ, unaffected by any, "remainest the same" through all. The years of the creature may be and are numbered, but what thou art, thou also wast and shalt be—"thy years shall not fail."

The text presents Christ to us as the Omnipotent, as well as the Immutable, for it declares him to be the author of creation's changes. "As a vesture *shalt Thou fold them up*," it says, "and they shall be changed." It was he who created the heavens and the earth at first, as the former verse declares: it was he who then looked on everything which he had made and pronounced it very good. And when man's sin had made all things very bad, it was he who gave command, and heaven and earth were mingled in one common ruin. He also is the author of the heavens and earth which are now. And when man's sin shall exceed the limits of his patience, he shall speak the word, and the fire shall carry them away; he shall speak again and a new creation shall take their place. These are mighty acts, but they are nothing to the Omnipotent. As easily as a man folds up a worn-out garment and substitutes another in its place, so easily shall Christ fold up the heavens and stretch them out again; destroy the earth, and call it once more into being. "They all shall wax old" is the sublime language of the text; "but thou art the same;" years make no change on thee. Thine arm is as strong to day as when it laid the foundation of the universe; as able now to destroy and restore again as it was at first to create.

There have not been wanting impious men, who have

denied the sacred truths now set forth from Scripture, and have affirmed that Christ is a mere man or an angel. It is easy, thank God, to confute this impiety, if men will bow to the authority of his word. But let us not esteem this as a matter of mere argument. The question whether our Saviour is truly God, is a question which concerns our dearest interests. The value of the soul is infinite: it is formed for eternity. And we need,—we surely need to know that he on whom its eternal hopes are resting, is able to do for us what he has promised, and is willing as well as able. If Christ be a mere man or an angel, he may have promised beyond his ability, and so be unable to perform. Or he may have changed his mind since he made the promise, and be found at last unwilling to perform it. If either of these things happen, our eternal all is lost. But the only security against them is found in the Godhead of the Saviour, in the omnipotence and immutability of him in whom we trust. The Omnipotent cannot have promised beyond his ability to perform, for that ability is infinite: and the Immutable cannot alter in the affections and purposes of his heart; what he is to-day, he remains for ever. These are no vain words. The great promise of the gospel is resurrection and eternal life. We have Christ's word as our security for this unspeakable blessing: He has said that he will confer it on us, if we hope in him. "This is the will," he said, "of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and *I will raise him up at the last day.*"¹ He has also told us, "I am the resurrection and the life...whosoever believeth on me, *shall never die.*"² But how do we know that he is able to perform these words? A creature cannot raise to life; a creature cannot guarantee eternity. His own life is the gift of another, and depends for its continuance on another's will. But when we know that he who has given to us these promises is God, the author of life from the beginning, we are delivered from all fear of his ability to perform them. What he has done once, he can do again. He said, "let the waters bring forth

¹ John vi. 40.² John xi. 25, 26.

abundantly the moving creature that hath life...let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind...*and it was so.*" He "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, *and man became a living soul.*"¹ He has also given life to us and to our fathers before us, since the world began. He has given to us our bodies with their members, our minds with their faculties, our hearts with their affections. And our security for life in the world to come, is that he has promised it. It is indeed a mighty promise; but he is the Omnipotent. His hand has laid the foundations of the earth, and his right hand has spanned the heavens; there is nothing too hard for him. As the Christian poet so beautifully sings,—

"The word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies,
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

And we have the same guarantee that this life shall be eternal. He has said that it shall be so, whose years, as the text tells us, "shall not fail." He lifts up his hand to heaven and says, I live for ever; and "because I live," is his word to us, "ye shall live also."²

And who can tell the consolation of trusting in a Saviour whom we know to be immutable! We need not ask the fearfully anxious question—shall he ever cease to love us? The Immutable changes not. He loved man while he sojourned on earth, and when he died on Calvary; and loves him still. We need not ask—will he keep his promises. His heart is bent on keeping them, as much this day as when his sacred lips first uttered them on earth. It is eighteen hundred years since Jesus said, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,"—"he that believeth in me hath everlasting life." And this is his mind still, yea it is his mind for ever. And those who have believed that he came forth from God, and have come to him as their Saviour, shall find his love to be unchanging, his mercy to be eternal. The disciple who lay on his bosom and knew his heart, tells

¹ Gen. i. 20—24; II. 7.

² John xiv. 19.

us that "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end."¹ Isaiah speaking in his name, appeals to his believing people, "can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?—yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee."² And St. Paul, having set forth the grace of that Saviour whom in the text he preaches to us, exclaims in holy triumph, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life...nor things present, nor things to come...shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."³ This is the true meaning of what is called the perseverance of the saints. It is not that *we persevere*, for there is no stability in us. But we commit our souls to Christ's faithful keeping, and *Christ, the Immutable, perseveres in keeping us to the end*. If we had not this assurance, all joy and confidence of salvation would be gone. But, blessed be God, we have it. And therefore the weakest amongst us, unfeignedly trusting in Christ, may sing with the Christian poet,—

" My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity shall not erase,
Engraved on his heart it remains
In lines of indelible grace."

And again,—

" Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below nor above,
Can make him his purpose forego,
Or sever my soul from his love."

Let us know the Lord Jesus then as our Saviour, the object of our daily confidence, of our fervent love. Let us believe the promises of the Omnipotent, let us commit our souls to the keeping of the Unchangeable, and we shall not be put to shame. And let us learn to give our hearts' best love to him who left the glories of eternity, and died on this wretched earth, that we miserable sinners might partake of his eternal blessedness. God grant this grace to us all!

¹ John xiii. 1.

² Isaiah xlix. 15.

³ Rom. viii. 38, 39.

LECTURE V.

Hebrews i. 13—14.

“ But to which of the angels said he at any time, sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

WE are now arrived at the close of the first chapter of this epistle. No one can have studied it with any degree of care, without having remarked a striking connection in its parts. The first three verses contain *in brief*, what is amplified, in the last eleven, *in detail*. In the first three verses we have statements; in the last eleven we have the same statements successively proved out of holy Scripture. The first three verses are a demonstration of the superiority of Christ to prophets. He is shewn to be better, because he is the Son—the emanation of the Father's excellence—the Creator, Upholder, and Lord of all. And in proof that this dignity is really his, it is stated that he is now sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The last eleven verses are a demonstration of his superiority to angels also. And the very same considerations are again brought forward in proof. But St. Paul is not now satisfied with statements; he proves by unanswerable Scripture citations every claim which he advances for his Lord. He proves him to be the Son by two Scriptures which declare him to be so, and confirms their testimony by a third which presents him to creation as the object of divine worship. He proves him to be the excellent one, the lover of righteousness and hater of iniquity, from the forty-fifth Psalm. He proves him to be

the creator, upholder, and lord of all, by a citation from the forty-fifth and hundred and second Psalms. And finally, from the hundred and tenth Psalm, cited in the text before us, he proves that seat of honour which is God's testimony to the Divinity of his person, to have been a seat designed for him of old. The first chapter of this epistle contains therefore a testimony to the glory of the Mediator, such as we do not meet with from one end of God's word to the other. And it derives a very peculiar value from its *double character*. For, as I have already remarked, it is the witness of the Old Testament to this all-important truth, brought out for us and exhibited by an inspired writer of the New. St. Paul, in writing it, to use Christ's illustration, "like a man that is an house-holder," has brought forth for us "out of his treasure *things new and old*."¹

With this brief-sketch of the contents of the chapter, let us consider the text before us.

But to which of the angels said he at any time, sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Of what St. Paul here says of angels I shall speak hereafter, at present I confine myself to what he says concerning Christ. His words are a quotation from the hundred and tenth Psalm, and contain a three-fold testimony to Christ's supreme dignity and glory. I. He is desired *to sit* in the presence of heaven's Majesty. II. The seat appointed to him is the highest seat of honour, on God's *right hand*. III. God makes common cause with him: he is desired to sit there till his enemies be made his footstool. These honours can belong to a Divine person only. And the text which declares them to belong to Christ, is therefore appositely cited by St. Paul to prove that he is such. A due consideration of the three things now mentioned will satisfy us that this is true.

I. The Father desires Christ *to sit*. We may not *sit* in the presence of an earthly king; far less may the most

¹ Matt. xiii. 52.

exalted creature sit in the presence of God. We have many instances, in holy Scripture, of God appearing to his people; we have not a single instance of his desiring them to sit in his presence. He vouchsafed to appear to Abraham. But we read even of the father of the faithful, the friend of God—"Abraham stood yet before the Lord."¹ He vouchsafed to appear to Moses and Joshua, two of his most favoured servants. But his word to both was, "loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy."² He appeared also to Daniel, the man "greatly beloved." Yet even to him his word was, "stand upright; and when he had spoken this word unto me," says the prophet, "I stood trembling."³ How very different is his word to Christ! To him alone he says, "sit thou."

II. The Father does more than invite Christ to sit, he bids him occupy the highest seat of honour: "sit thou" he says, "on my right hand." If these words invited Christ to occupy a seat beside the Father's throne, they would confer on him an honour never granted to any angel. But they invite him to a seat infinitely more exalted, even to sit on the Father's throne, beside him. This is indeed the highest seat of honour; the Father's own seat is not above it. And we know from the testimony of his fellow-apostles that this was St. Paul's understanding of the language which he here quotes: "I overcame," says Jesus, speaking by St. John, "and am set down with my Father on his throne."⁴ He has taken that glorious seat by the invitation addressed to him in the text. And we must therefore regard that invitation as equivalent to a Divine decree, "that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."⁵

III. It is also to be observed that he who has invited Christ to take this glorious seat, makes common cause with him: "sit on my right hand," he says, "until I make thine enemies thy footstool." And the Father's Divine power is thus engaged to put Christ's enemies under his feet, because the Father acknowledges Christ's cause to be his own. Jesus

¹ Gen. xviii. 22.² Exodus iii. 5; Joshua v. 15.³ Daniel x. 11.⁴ Revel. iii. 21.⁵ John v. 23.

himself declared this, while on earth. He said, "I and my Father are one."¹ And again he said, "he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."² And again, "he that hateth me, hateth my Father also."³ And when men had hated and persecuted and slain him, the Father from heaven confirmed these his words on earth. For he raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the right hand of the throne, and promised, as he bade him take that seat, that he would make his enemies his footstool. And by these acts he declared to creation, and still declares—I and the Son are one; he that saw him, saw me; he that hated him and slew him, hates me also, and would aim at my life, if his arm could reach my throne. It does not suit the majesty of God thus to make common cause with any creature. Besides, enmity to Christ and enmity to the Father, are by this Divine decree and promise declared to be the same. But they would not be so, if Christ were not "the brightness of the Father's glory"—the emanation of His uncreated and eternal excellence.

Let us sum up then in one word the doctrine of the verse before us. He of whom St. Paul is here discoursing to us, sits in the presence of heaven's Majesty. He also occupies the eternal throne, side by side with the eternal Father. And the almightiness of the Father's Godhead is engaged to put his enemies beneath his feet. Surely these are marks of Divinity. If they be not, nowhere shall we find Divinity. If he of whom these things are written, be not truly God, we may adopt the language of the fool, and say, "there is no God."

St. Paul was now writing for Hebrews. The unbelieving among them, who gloried in the dispensation ordained by angels, regarded it as blasphemy to say that anything greater could succeed. And the believing among them, who had been accustomed from childhood to regard that dispensation with awe and reverence, feared to transfer too much of their confidence and allegiance to another. But be it known to you, oh ye Hebrews, St. Paul would say, that Messiah, the Mediator of the gospel dispensation, is preferred by God

¹ John x. 30.² John xiv. 9.³ John xv. 23.

above angels. And in proof that it is so, he is sitting now at the right hand of power, declared as God's co-equal Son. Say not, he adds, that this is a new doctrine of mine; your own Scriptures declare that this is Messiah's dignity and Messiah's glorious seat. These Scriptures shall witness against you, if you oppose yourselves and blaspheme; yea, they shall be accomplished, when you are crushed by Messiah's wrath. But if on the other hand, you sincerely desire to know God's will that you may do it, be not afraid to give your confidence to Christ, and to follow him without fear. Those Scriptures which you have received from Moses and the prophets encourage you to do so; they testify of the dignity of his person and his present seat in glory. But St. Paul was not writing for Hebrews only; his words are full of blessed encouragement and solemn warning to us Gentiles also. We may well believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; we may well trust in him whom the Father has so honoured, whom the Father has declared both by word and act to be Jehovah. To treat him with suspicion is to say that God is faithless. Enmity to him, is also enmity to God, and shall be visited as such. If we will not be the friends of his bosom, we must be the footstool for his feet to rest on. The enjoyment of his love, or the pressure of his wrath, are the alternatives proposed to us. May God give us grace to make the choice of wisdom!

Having spoken thus of Christ in the thirteenth verse, St. Paul proceeds, in the fourteenth, to speak more particularly of angels.

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall INHERIT salvation?

Nothing can exhibit in a more striking light the dignity and glory of Christ, than the contrast here intimated between him and angels. He has just been presented to us as the co-equal Son, occupying the Father's seat of empire; they are now spoken of as servants, who wait the bidding of his word, to go forth and minister to his people. We saw in the

last lecture, that he is the Creator, whilst they are creatures. And now we learn that he is the sender, whilst they are the sent. For he created them that he might send them on his errands; he made them that he might use them at his pleasure. To what a measureless height then is he exalted above them! To which of *them*, asks St. Paul, did God say at any time, sit on my right hand? To *none* of them; they are "*all* ministering spirits." Far be it from God to speak so to any servant; it is language fitting only for a son. No angel presumes to sit at all in his presence. "I am Gabriel," says the most exalted of these intelligences, "who stand in the presence of God."

But let us enter more particularly on the consideration of the verse before us. St. Paul calls angels ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall inherit salvation. He would prove to the Hebrews, by this consideration, that they were inferior to Messiah. And the Hebrews must have felt the force of this argument, for they were well aware that this was the employment of angels. They knew from their own Scriptures, that many sainted men who had looked to Messiah as their Lord, their life, their salvation, had been waited on, and ministered to, by these glorious spirits. Angels had delivered Lot from the impending destruction of Sodom:¹ angels had comforted the heart of Jacob when Esau came to meet him with four hundred men.² An angel had brought food to Elijah, when he fled from the face of Jezebel:³ an angel had been despatched from heaven in answer to the prayer of Daniel, to reveal to him the purposes of God.⁴ The unbelieving Hebrews, who preferred the dispensation ordained by angels to the dispensation of Christ, were therefore left without excuse. Whilst the believing among them, for whose instruction St. Paul was writing, could not fail to see, that in turning from the law to Jesus, they were forsaking the servants for the Master.

But we, who in God's mercy are free from the darkening effect of Hebrew prejudices, may take a more extended view

¹ Luke i. 10.

² Gen. xix.

³ Gen. xxxii. 1—5.

⁴ I Kings xix. 4—8

⁵ Dan. ix. 20, 21.

of the contents of the verse before us, and reap much instruction from it. It teaches us not only the dignity of Christ, but the dignity to which he has advanced his people. His servants serve them, his ministers wait on them. The expression, *inheritors of salvation*, includes both him and them. For he whom the Father sustained in bearing our dreadful curse, whom he delivered also from the hand of Satan, and from the power of the grave, is eminently *the inheritor of salvation*. We are taught this in a very striking way, by the title of the eighteenth Psalm. It is one of Christ's Psalms, inscribed,—“to the giver of victory, a Psalm of the beloved, who spake unto Jehovah the words of this song, in the day that Jehovah delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the power of hell.”¹ And to this inheritor of salvation angels ministered in an especial manner. An angel announced his advent before he was conceived in the womb;² angels proclaimed his birth, and ushered him into the world with their songs.³ When Herod sought his life, an angel warned Joseph and Mary, and they fled with him into Egypt.⁴ When Herod was dead, the heavenly messenger appeared again, and they returned, at his bidding, into the land of Israel.⁵ When at the commencement of his ministry, Jesus was tempted of the Devil, and had fasted forty days, “angels came and ministered to him.”⁶ When he fainted in Gethsemane, in the prospect of his passion, “there appeared an angel to him from heaven, strengthening him.”⁷ When wicked men laid hands on him to drag him to death, the slightest expression of a wish would have called at once, to his rescue, more than twelve legions of angels:⁸ they aided him not, only because he willed to die. But it was the Father's will that he should rise again. The time appointed for his resurrection came, and the angel of the Lord descending from heaven opened the door of his sepulchre, that the Lord of angels might come forth.⁹ And when Mary Magdalene came to seek

¹ Horsley.² Luke i. 26—35.³ Luke ii. 8—14.⁴ Matt. ii. 13, 14.⁵ Matt. ii. 19—21.⁶ Matt. iv. 11.⁷ Luke xxii. 43.⁸ Matt. xxvi. 53.⁹ Matt. xxviii. 2.

him, she found two of these loving ministers sitting, "the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."¹ Such was their ministration to him. And after he had left the world, they ministered to his people also. When the apostles were imprisoned by the Jewish rulers, an angel opened the prison-doors, and bade them go forth and preach.² When Cornelius sought the Lord by prayer and fasting, an angel appeared to him and desired him to send for St. Peter.³ When St. Peter himself was imprisoned by king Herod, and about to be brought forth to death, the Lord sent his angel and delivered him from his hand.⁴ And finally, when St. Paul was shipwrecked on his voyage to Rome, and he and all who sailed with him expected to be swallowed up in the deep, the angel of the Lord stood by him and comforted his heart with Divine assurances of safety. And this angelic ministry to the faithful continues still. "Take heed," says Christ, "that ye despise not one of these little ones...*their angels* do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven."⁵ And these blessed spirits count it no dishonour thus to minister; nay, they give thanks to God who permits them such a privilege.⁶ Nor does St. Paul here mention their ministry to their dishonour. He mentions it only, that by knowing their place and employment, we may learn by contrast, to know the dignity of Christ, and the dignity also to which he has advanced his people.

What then is this dignity? It is the dignity of sonship. "To as many as received him," says St. John, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God."⁷ It is because God's people are his sons, that they shall inherit salvation; for to inherit salvation is to inherit Christ's glory. "*If children*," says St. Paul, "*then heirs...joint-heirs with Christ...that we may be also glorified together.*"⁸ He has been commanded to sit in the presence of God, and the seat appointed to him is on the right hand of the Father's majesty. And when the day of glory comes, we his believing

¹ John xx. 11, 12.² Acts v. 17—20.³ Acts x. 1—6.⁴ Acts. xii. 6—11.⁵ Matt. xviii. 10.⁶ Ps. ciii. 20, 21.⁷ John i. 12.⁸ Rom. viii. 17.

people shall be commanded to sit also, and the right hand of the Saviour's majesty shall be the seat that is appointed to us.' Well may angels minister to those who have such a hope. "Order is heaven's first law:" it is fitting that in God's family the servants wait upon the children.

It is needful to pause here and resolve what may appear to some a most serious difficulty. Christ, it may be said, is declared to be a Divine person, because Scripture calls him the Son of God; because it declares that he sits before the Father's majesty, and occupies the Father's throne. But if we his believing people, who confessedly are mere creatures, be also called sons of God, and if Scripture declares that we also shall sit in God's presence, nay that our seat shall be Christ's throne, this argument cannot stand good. It does stand good, as a little explanation will shew. God is not Christ's father and our father after the same manner. Christ is son by *generation*; we are sons by *adoption* only. Christ's dignity is his own; ours is conferred on us by him. Scripture states these things in the plainest manner. It repeatedly calls Christ God's *only-begotten* Son.¹ And we are told that the Jews sought to kill Jesus, because he said "that God was his own father, making himself equal with God."² Now we never can be sons of God in such a sense as this. Our sonship is by faith in Christ, and through the spirit dwelling in us. "Ye are all the children of God," says St. Paul, "through faith in Christ Jesus."³ And again—"as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."⁴ But this is a real sonship. *For faith in Christ, and the possession of his spirit, constitute a spiritual union between us and him. And through oneness with him who is THE SON OF GOD, we become truly and properly sons of God.* And he who has made us by adoption the children of his Father, confers on us the dignity which belongs to children. "The kingdom of heaven," said the Lord Jesus, "is like unto a certain king who made a marriage for his son."⁵ The Father-king in this parable, is God the Father; the Son is

¹ Revel. iii. 21.² John iii. 16.³ John v. 18, original.⁴ Galatians iii. 26.⁵ Romans viii. 14.⁶ Matthew xxii. 2.

Christ; the wife who is sought for the Son, is the church, the company of the saved. For the church, because she is joined to Christ in indissoluble and eternal union through faith and by the Holy Ghost, is called in Scripture, "the bride, the Lamb's wife."¹ Let us follow out this illustration. A king's son, his father's heir, marries a peasant's child. By making her his wife, he makes her the king's daughter, and confers on her his own rank and honour. So it is with the church. Christ by making her his wife, has conferred on her the blessing of adoption: and God his Father addresses her, "hearken *oh daughter*, and consider, and incline thine ear."² This at once explains the future glory of the saints. It is not their merit as creatures, nor the favour which God bears to them as such; it is their union with Christ which shall exalt them. Through that union they shall take a place, which no creature as such can ever occupy. They shall sit in God's presence, because Christ sits there; yea their seat shall be the throne of glory, because it is his seat. And he who makes common cause with Christ, shall make common cause with them also, saying of their enemies, "I will make them to worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."³ Let us follow our illustration to the end. The king of whom we have spoken, bequeaths his crown to the prince his son, and the peasant's child becomes in consequence the queen. The eldest nobles in the land now bow before her. But they bow before the queen, not before the peasant-girl. Her obscure original is forgotten, and none dare mention it; for the king has ennobled her, and the king is the fountain of honour. The daughters of the highest nobility too are her inferiors. She was their inferior originally; but the king has made her his wife, and that has exalted her above them. Thus then shall it be hereafter. The day is coming, when God the Father shall install Christ as King. And the church, the company of the saved, shall then appear in regal dignity, standing as Queen on Christ's right hand.⁴ The highest angels shall then appear inferior to the saints. They were not so originally, but Christ has

¹ Revel. xxi. 9.² Psalm xlv. 10.³ Revel. iii. 9.⁴ Psalm xlv. 9.

made them so; He who "took not on him the nature of angels, took on him the seed of Abraham."¹ The Holy Spirit has not disdained to refer to the usages of a royal court, to explain the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. It is one of these usages that the highest nobility wait upon a king and queen, as their attendants, their ministers, their cupbearers, and esteem such services as posts of honour. And the reference to this in the forty-fifth Psalm, warrants us in saying that so shall it be hereafter. The highest seraphim shall wait in the ages to come, on the king and queen of glory, Christ and his saved people, and count themselves ennobled by such ministry and service.

From all this we see what it is *to inherit salvation*, and how it is that Christ's people are exalted to such a height. But the theme is so glorious that it is almost impossible to dismiss it. It is enough to make one weep, to hear the language which is often used on this subject. The honour of being permitted to worship God with the holy angels, is commonly held forth as one of the most attractive exhibitions of heaven. But this is telling the children of the honour of conversing with the servants! If we are ever counted worthy to attain that world and Christ's throne, we shall see cherub and seraph far beneath our feet. As we walk upon the earth, we see the clouds above our heads, and feel our own littleness in comparison with their altitude. But were we on the summit of Mont Blanc, we should see these clouds beneath our feet, and could watch the lightning as it flashed, and hear the thunder rolling far below us. And in like manner, dwelling as we do here in cottages of clay, with frail mortal bodies which are crushed before the moth, we lift up our eyes to heaven, and when we think of the holy angels, we think of them only as exalted far above us. But when we who are Christ's believing people have exchanged these mortal for immortal bodies, and these our clay cottages for mansions in the skies, we shall look down on these angelic intelligences, and be filled with wonder to see them so far beneath us. For we shall be invested then with the glorious

¹ Hebrews ii. 16.

dignity in reserve now for the children of the Highest, and no possible accumulation of creature-honours shall appear anything in our eyes.

All this greatly strengthens the argument for the Divinity of Christ's person. It is by union with a king, that his espoused becomes a queen. And it proves Christ to be One to whom Divine honour and dignity appertain, that union with him should raise children of the dust to such a dazzling height of glory.

But what, it may be asked, is the practical use of this? There is nothing more deeply practical, than adequate conceptions of heavenly blessedness. Low and inadequate conceptions of it produce languid desires after it. Men say that they hope for heaven, and live, while they say so, devoted to this present world. Whereas if we know what heaven really is, we shall be constrained either to give up all hope of attaining it, or to live worthy of such a hope. We cannot look for the glories of eternity, and at the same time give our thoughts, our time, our affections to the perishing vanities of a day. Almighty God himself teach us to set our hearts on these glories, and enable us to live for them!

LECTURE VI.

Hebrews ii. 1—3.

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?”

ST. PAUL having in the first chapter discoursed so very largely concerning Christ, and salvation by him, proceeds in the verses which we have just read, to apply personally and practically all that he has been saying. He addresses himself and the Hebrews, he addresses us, he addresses the Church and the world till the end of time.

Therefore—

Because God has in these last days spoken by his Son—by Him who is the heir of all things, who made the worlds, who is the Brightness of His glory, the exact impression of His substance, and the Upholder of creation by His word—by Him who having once died for us on earth, now sits our exalted Mediator, speaking to us from heaven,

We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.

GOD TAKING FLESH OF MAN THAT HE MAY SPEAK TO MAN, is the great mark of the Christian dispensation. And want of heed when He so draws near to us, is the expression of

contempt. It is to put Christ to open shame. It is to say that the message of wisdom, mercy and love which He has brought from the bosom of the Father, is not worthy of being listened to. How different was the treatment which the Queen of Sheba gave to Solomon! She came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear him; and when she listened, she was ravished with his wisdom. She will therefore rise in the judgment with listless and indifferent Israel; "a greater than Solomon," THE INCARNATE SAVIOUR, was among them, and they heard him not.¹ How different also was the treatment which the Ninevites gave to Jonah! "The king arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes;" yea, man and beast were clothed with sackcloth, and a whole people cried mightily to God.² And they shall therefore rise in the judgment with heedless and gainsaying Israel; "a greater than Jonah," THE INCARNATE SAVIOUR was among them, and they repented not.³ And these witnesses shall testify against us also, if, inheriting as we do, Israel's distinguishing mercy, we follow the example so fatally set. For Christ will not accept from any a listless hearing of his words. His dignity demands *heed—earnest heed—a heed more earnest* than we give to any other message, an attention more rivetted than we yield to any other messenger.

This earnest heed, this rivetted attention to "the things which we have heard," is needful also for our own salvation—

Lest at any time WE SHOULD RUN OUT AS LEAKING VESSELS.

This world's knowledge remains with us, but our treacherous memories are as leaking vessels, when the knowledge of salvation is the treasure committed to them. It is the state of our hearts which occasions this; *we do not like* to retain God in our knowledge.⁴ This is a fatal tendency, for to forget Christ and his gospel is to lose our souls.⁵ And

¹ Matt. xii. 42.

² Jonah iii. 6—8.

³ Matt. xii. 41.

⁴ Rom. i. 28.

⁵ I Cor. xv. 2.

therefore according to our estimate of their value, should be the earnestness of our heed. Moreover, there are seasons in the history of every one of us, when we are in especial danger of forgetting Christ. A season of prosperity is one of these. Pride and worldly enjoyment conspire, at such a time, to harden the heart. A season of adversity is another. The heart crushed by sorrow and disappointment, refuses at such a time to take interest in anything. A season of worldly trouble may be mentioned also. The mind is then tossed and agitated by anxiety and care, and cannot compose itself to serious thought. This consideration gives great fulness of meaning to the words before us, "*lest at any time we should let them slip.*" For Satan takes advantage of times like these, to drive Christ and his salvation altogether out of our minds. Let us not be ignorant then, either of our own hearts, or of his devices. And since these hearts are prone, especially in seasons of temptation, to forget Christ and turn from him, let us seek grace from God, that giving more earnest heed to our Saviour's words, and cleaving to him faithfully, we may win his salvation in the end.

These solemn considerations are next amplified and enlarged upon.

For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?

"The word spoken by angels" was the law given on Mount Sinai. It is here contrasted with the gospel, the word "spoken by the Lord." It was God who spake the law also, an unbelieving Jew might have replied. But the Apostle was prepared with his answer. It was indeed God who spake it, but not GOD INCARNATE. It was God in like manner who spake to our first parents in Eden—who blessed Noah and his sons—who called Abraham—who spake to Moses in the bush, and to Israel by the prophets, but not GOD INCARNATE. Such speaking is peculiar to Christianity,

the special mark of this last dispensation of the world. And it is *the reason of reasons* why we should listen to the gospel of Christ.

We do not know in what way angels ministered, when the law was given; but Scripture distinctly states the fact. It tells us that God, on that day of solemnity, was surrounded by myriads of these glorious spirits. "The Lord came from Sinai," says Moses himself, ... "he came with ten thousands of holy ones."¹ And the Psalmist tells us that "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," and that, "the Lord is among them as (he was) in Sinai, in the holy place."² We are also told that angels were in some way employed in delivering the law to Moses. St. Stephen reminds the Jews that they had "received the law by the disposition of angels:"³ and St. Paul declares to the Galatians that "it was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator."⁴ This word spoken by angels, as we are told in the text, "was steadfast," i.e. was established, was confirmed. For God confirmed and established it, by visiting, as we read in the words that follow, "every transgression and disobedience with a just recompence of reward." And St. Paul therefore argues with the Hebrews and with us, that God will visit with a sorer punishment those who neglect the great salvation which has been proclaimed by the mouth of the Lord.

The Hebrews were in a condition to feel the force of this argument. They were well aware that under the law of Moses, mercy had never been shewn to the wilful and presumptuous transgressor. They knew that when their fathers worshipped the golden calf, the offence had not been expiated by the blood of three thousand men.⁵ They knew that when Korah, Dathan and Abiram rose up against Moses and Aaron, they had been swallowed up by the earth, and gone down living into the grave.⁶ They knew also that smaller offences than these had not escaped condign punishment. When a man in the heat of passion, had blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed, the congregation had stoned

¹ Deut. xxxiii. 2.

² Psalm lxxviii. 17.

³ Acts vii. 53.

⁴ Galat. iii. 19.

⁵ Exod. xxxii. 26—35.

⁶ Num. xvi. 31—35.

him by God's command.¹ When another had gone out merely to gather a few sticks on the Sabbath-day, he had perished by the same dreadful death.* And viewing these acts of severity as an exhibition of the character of God, the Hebrews could not fail to see that escape from Divine vengeance was impossible, if they despised the Lord's Christ and neglected his salvation. St. Paul calls it "so great salvation." This implies that the law of Moses with which he has just contrasted it, was, in one sense, *a salvation*. And so it was. For its rites and ceremonies testified to Christ, and it contained promises of a life to come. The sincere worshipper moreover, by the light which it afforded to him, could find acceptance with God here, and attain to this life hereafter. But St. Paul's words also imply that it was not to be compared with the salvation revealed in the gospel, for he pronounces *it* in comparison, to be "*so great salvation*." It is so, because of the dignity of its Mediator. A prophet was the mediator of the law, and angels were its ministers. But the Mediator and Minister of the gospel is CHRIST, the sender of prophets, CHRIST, the Creator of angels. And it is so, for another reason. The law with its rites and ceremonies, shadowed forth but darkly the true atonement for transgression, and its promises of life and blessedness to come, were only dim and indistinct intimations. How very different is the gospel! It sets forth Christ plainly as the expiation for iniquity, and assures us of the Father's mercy through faith in him. It also proclaims his resurrection and glory at the right hand of God, as the sure and certain pledge of the resurrection and glory of his people. The whole force of this apostolic argument now comes before us. The contemner of Moses and of angels escaped not. How then, oh ye Hebrews, shall we escape, if we contemn the Son of God! The despiser of the scanty grace of the legal dispensation escaped not. How then, oh ye Hebrews, shall we escape, if we neglect the abundant grace of the gospel! I would also remark that the word "*neglect*" is very full of meaning. While it left the warning of the

¹ Leviticus xxiv. 10—14.

* Numbers xv. 32—36.

Apostle to tell with full force on Christ's active and presumptuous enemies among the unbelieving Hebrews, it reminded others who might suppose that neutrality was safety, that *not to be his friends* was sufficient to expose them to his vengeance. And it reminded those within the Hebrew church, that except they were found valuing, and applying to their own souls the salvation of Christ, their place in this house should not save them in the day of his anger. Finally, it reminded those who had been taught to value Christ and rejoice in him, that it was only by continuing to do so, and by not letting slip the things which they had heard, that they should attain salvation in the end. And he includes himself in the warning, he asks, "how shall *we* escape." The question contains its answer—we shall not escape. On you and me together, says St. Paul, if found to have neglected Christ, God's vengeance shall alight in the day of his coming wrath.

All this applies equally to us. The salvation of which St. Paul is here speaking, has been proclaimed to us in the gospel, and sealed as ours in the sacraments. Its greatness, as we shall see by a reference again to the first chapter, appears in two respects. I. Christ has done *great* things to save us from our lost estate. II. Christ has raised our nature, and has promised to raise our persons through faith in him, to a *great* height of glory. And the illustration of these two particulars, will shew us, by God's help, that we can by no means escape, "if we neglect *so great* salvation."

I. The Son of God, we were told in the first chapter, has come to declare to us the Father's word. But He was not satisfied with opening the heavens to speak to us: he came down and dwelt on the earth. As a man among men he taught and instructed us; he warned us of the consequences of sin; he revealed to us the grace of the Father; he besought us to forsake our sins, and turn to the Lord our God. Like the shepherd in the parable, he went after that which was lost: like the woman with the piece of silver, he sought for us diligently as for precious treasure. And this was but a small thing; "by himself he purged our sins,"—

he laid down his life to bring us back to God. He did not merely point out the way, and beseech us to walk in it; he also shed his precious blood to open that way for us, to enable us to walk in it without obstruction. And now it is open. The curse of the law is now removed—his one offering has rent the vail. And God, once concealed behind that vail, but now revealed, says, “come unto me and I will receive you, and will be a father to you.”¹ His gospel also encourages us to come, pointing to Christ, and saying, “behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”² These are the great things which Christ has done for us; this is the first part of the great salvation. We were lost in ignorance of God, and lost under his displeasure. Christ has made known the Father, Christ has removed the curse; “all things are ready,” and whosoever will, may come.

II. These great things have been done to exalt us to a great height of glory. Our nature is already exalted, for Jesus, by incarnation, has taken manhood into God. We learned this also from the first chapter. It told us that the Son of God *and Man* now sits on high as the Father's begotten, the object of worship to angels. It told us that on *his* head the Father's crown is resting, and that *he* now occupies the Father's throne. It told us that in man's countenance, creation is now to read for ever the expression of the mind of invisible Godhead. This is indeed an ennobling of human nature, of the human race. As an eloquent writer has beautifully expressed it, “our brother is the God of angels.” Unitarians speak much of the dignity of human nature. But denying as they do, the Godhead of Christ, they know nothing of this dignity. Man's real dignity consists in what I have just declared—**THE SON OF THE HIGHEST IS A MAN.**

The sovereign of a mighty empire marries into an obscure family. But the family of which he has become a member can be obscure no longer; connection with royalty ennobles it. **THE KING OF KINGS** has become one of us, a member of the human family. And his unspeakable condescension

¹ II Corinthians vi. 17, 18.

² John i. 29.

has for ever ennobled our race. Were an earthly sovereign to do as we have now supposed, the members of the family of which he had become one, would expect to be raised, through his connection with them, to posts of honour in his kingdom. And we may expect the same, from the Lord Jesus. It is true that we are originally beggars; but "he raises the beggar from the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."¹ We learned this also from the first chapter. It told us that Christ and his people should be glorified together. It told us that the angels, the creatures of his power and ministers of his will, went forth at his bidding, to wait on them as the heirs of his glory. And this eternal and inconceivable dignity, conferred on humanity in Christ, and then for Christ's sake, on us his people, is the second part of the great salvation.

On this point however I would recapitulate more particularly. This glory, as we have now seen, is reserved for Christ's people: all men shall not inherit it. Christ indeed, by incarnation, has made himself a member of the human family, and has become one with us all. But he has done this *to make us one with him*. And we must become so before we can inherit with him. On this point also we are instructed, in considering the first chapter. We learned that by trusting in Christ as our Saviour, and receiving his Spirit into our hearts, we become his fellows and co-heirs of his glory. For Christ is presented to us in the gospel as our Saviour. And when our hearts are opened to trust in him in that endearing character, he comes into these hearts by his spirit, and makes them his abode. And then, to use the language of our church, "we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us." Baptism is the seal of this blessed privilege. For we are baptized into Christ, as the seal of union with Christ. But we must not be satisfied with the mere rite; it declares only God's gracious purpose, which we may reject against ourselves. We must seek the thing sealed in baptism—we must receive

¹ Psalm cxiii. 7, 8.

Christ into our hearts. And then, as surely as he now sits on high, so surely shall we one day sit beside him, crowned, sceptred and anointed kings. I cannot but observe it as a remarkable feature of the gospel, that having laid us low as if beyond redemption, by declaring us accursed of God, it lifts us high beyond all hope, by seating us on Christ's throne. Well may St. Paul call it in the text, "so great salvation!" Well may he exclaim, "how shall we escape, if we neglect" it!

It is truly wonderful that men should neglect it. But the very abundance of God's mercy seems to make men careless of it. Were he more niggard in bestowing it, peradventure they might learn to value it. We are sentenced to die by our country's laws. A petition, soliciting our pardon, is forwarded to the throne. We know the day on which the royal answer is expected. Can we await its approach without anxiety? The day comes, nay the hour which is to declare our fate, and we hear the footsteps of the messenger, as he approaches the door of our cell. Can we listen to such sounds unmoved? He brings with him news of pardon; can we hear them and be unaffected? And oh, if the coming of Christ to tell us the mind of God were still a future thing, if it were still a matter of uncertainty whether God would remit the sentence of eternal death which he has passed on us, how strangely hardened would that man appear who should say that the Divine decision on this awful question was to him a matter of indifference! But the exhibition of human nature under the gospel is stranger still. Christ has come and proclaimed the Divine forgiveness; nay more, he has promised to condemned malefactors a share in the glories of his kingdom. And what entertainment do men give to his message? It is almost universally neglected. They admit it into their creeds as a truth which they do not seek to deny, but they admit it not into their hearts as their hope and cherished joy. Amid men's various objects of interest and various pursuits, the love of God, his unspeakable mercy and his unhopd-for promises, come the very last in order. And this neglect of the great salvation is of all

proofs the most deeply affecting of the alienation of man's heart from God.

The first consequence of this neglect, shall be the loss of the blessing neglected. God has sworn in righteousness that those who set no value on his salvation, shall never partake of its blessings: and the Strength of Israel is not a man that he should lie. But ah, men know not now the amount of what they thus shall lose. Nor shall eternity itself unfold it perfectly, for it is infinite. The miserable shall be learning their loss for ever, but they shall not be able to reach its total sum. And while they learn it, they shall be tortured still by the reflection—our own neglect has been the cause of all. We might have had God's favour, but we did not think it worthy of our acceptance; we might have sat on high with the blessed One, amid the light and glories of eternity, but when that hope was set before us, we neglected it for the things of time. This bitter reflection is "the worm that dieth not." If that worm *could but be killed*, hell would be deprived of half its terrors. But it shall be *impossible to kill it*. If you and I lose our souls, we shall never be able, though we search to eternity, to find a deeper cause for it than our own neglect. The will of God is not the cause of it: God has made no decree against any man, save that the neglecter of Christ shall come short of Christ's salvation. The light of the judgment-seat and of eternity shall make clearly manifest the righteousness of this decree. And the miserable shall be constrained to acknowledge, throughout the ages of its endless execution, that they have been themselves the cause of their own woe.

But loss of promised good shall not be the only consequence of salvation neglected: the endurance of penal wrath is another element in hell. When God spake by angels, he would not suffer his word to be slighted; when he revealed even the scanty grace of the legal dispensation, he would not suffer that grace to be despised: he visited "every transgression and disobedience with a *just* recompence of reward." Now he is the just God still. It cannot therefore be supposed that when he has spoken to us by Christ from

heaven, he will suffer us to slight his word. It cannot be supposed that when he has revealed the abundant grace of the gospel, purchased by the tears and agonies, the travail and death of his beloved, he will suffer that grace to be despised and trampled on. If he was severe in the one case, he will be much more severe in the other; "if the word spoken by angels was steadfast," the despiser of Christ cannot hope to escape. Besides, Scripture tells us that God "is a jealous God," nay, that his "*name is Jealous*."¹ He is jealous of his dignity, jealous of his authority, jealous of his honour. That dignity is outraged, that authority is set at nought, that honour is insulted, when men refuse to hearken to him. He will therefore surely visit it. And this is only one meaning of this most awful name. *Jealousy is love turned into hatred, because it has been requited with neglect.* A husband who loves his wife, sees that her heart is toward another; and his jealousy burns in consequence, both against her and the man who has seduced her affections. Of all human feelings this jealousy is the most merciless. Scripture calls it "the rage of a man," and tells us that when actuated by it, "he will not spare in the day of vengeance:"² it also tells us that while "love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave."³ Now God has loved us most dearly. He has also proved this love by giving his Son to die, by raising our nature in him to the highest heavens, by promising to seat us beside him. And now he comes in the preached gospel, making earnest suit for our hearts in return. But the devil, the liar, the murderer, to whom we owe nothing save abhorrence, comes at the same time. And by his wiles, his temptations and his flatteries, he prevails to win for the world and sin, those affections which are due to God. Can God see this and not avenge it? He will avenge it fearfully. Seducer and seduced shall perish together in the day of his awakened wrath. The devil who has deceived men shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and as many as have been deceived by him, shall share his fearful doom.⁴

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 14. ² Prov. vi. 34. ³ Cant. viii. 6. ⁴ Rev. xx. 10—15.

Let us then take heed to ourselves, lest we neglect God's great salvation. It is not enough that we are not Christ's enemies: we must be his friends and devoted people. It is not enough that we are members of his church: we must be prizing his gospel in our hearts as our hope and cherished treasure. It addresses us as creatures ruined by transgression, but tells us of a sacrifice in which there is remission of sin. With unfeigned confession of sin we must trust unfeignedly in that sacrifice. It addresses us as creatures debased and depraved, but tells us of a Saviour filled with the Holy Ghost, and able to sanctify us for God. We must open our hearts to that Saviour that we may prove experimentally his spirit's cleansing power. It addresses us as creatures doomed to die, but sets before us the hope of resurrection out of death, and endless glory at God's right hand. We must embrace this hope, living above this present world, and having a reference to eternity in all which we are now engaged in. Finally, the gospel asks our hearts for God, in return for his love to us. Constrained by that love, we must yield them willingly. Nor must we do this for a time only; "the things which we have heard," must abide with us to the end. We must thus believe, thus hope, and thus love, till faith and hope be swallowed up in vision, and love be perfected for ever in the presence of the blessed God.

This exhortation applies to every one. No office in the church dispenses with the necessity of personal religion. The inspired Apostle who says in the words before us, "how shall we escape," was careful to keep under his body, lest when he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway.¹ Let us follow his example, whether we be pastors or people. The day is at hand when official position shall be ended, and every one of us stand naked before God. May He grant that then we may be found of him in peace—yea, that we may meet at God's right hand, and exchange our greetings there!

¹ I Cor. ix. 27.

LECTURE VII.

Hebrews ii. 3.

"Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."

THE words with which our text commences, were partly considered in the last lecture. But I have introduced them again, because they are connected with the argument which follows, as well as that which has preceded them. The Apostle has been discoursing to the Hebrews concerning God's great salvation, and warning them of the certain destruction which shall fall on those who neglect it. But do not think, he continues in the words which we have just read, that anything of that which I now urge on you, is a new doctrine of mine; the Lord himself testified to it all, in his personal ministry on earth. And if you object to me that I never knew him on earth, and never heard him, let us go to those who did know him on earth, and did hear him; let us listen to the solemn testimony of the twelve whom he sent forth, and see whether in anything that testimony disagrees with mine. By thus referring to other witnesses for the truth, St. Paul sought to strengthen the weak faith of the Hebrew church. For he knew that though it was weak, they were persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah, and that those who had heard him, and had been sent forth by him, were worthy of all credit. They were also in a condition to take up his reference. They were perfectly aware of what the Lord himself had preached, for the generation was yet living who had heard him. They were equally aware of what his

apostles had preached, because for years after his ascension these ministers had abode in Jerusalem, and gone in and out among them. They could therefore easily tell whether what was now urged on them by St. Paul, was the doctrine of his Lord and of his brethren, or was one peculiar to himself. We are not in their condition. Things which were difficulties and stumbling-blocks to them, are not so to us. And resting as we do on the inspired testimony of St. Paul, we do not feel the need of any other witness. But it is most profitable to compare Scripture with Scripture. Let us therefore examine the records which we have of Christ's ministry on earth, and see whether he affirms in his own person, all that his servant has declared concerning him in the first chapter of this book. Let us also examine the epistles of St. Peter and the writings of St. John, and see whether the word in their mouth confirms that of Christ their Master, and of St. Paul their fellow-labourer. The words of the text invite us to this employment. And we shall find it as pleasant as it is profitable and instructive.

Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord.

St. Paul, in the first chapter of this epistle, has testified to Christ as the Son of God, a messenger of greater dignity than prophets. He has borne testimony to him also as the son of man, who came to speak to us men in the name of God. He has declared that by the sacrifice of himself, this blessed One has purged our sins; that we being made the sons of God, might be his fellows and the co-heirs of his glory. Finally, he has warned us in the most solemn manner, that having been privileged with so great a salvation, we shall not escape, if we neglect it. Does Christ himself affirm these things? St. Paul in the text declares that he does. And a reference to his personal ministry will establish the truth of this declaration.

I. Christ declares himself to be the Son of God. When the high-priest asked him, "art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed," we are told by St. Mark that "Jesus said, I

AM."¹ And we are not left in doubt as to the meaning of this sacred designation. He meant to signify by using it, that he was a sharer in the Father's Divinity and eternity, and that he was entitled to share in the Father's honour, because he was one with the Father. The high-priest understood this to be his meaning; for he rent his clothes and exclaimed, "ye have heard the blasphemy." He could not fail indeed so to understand it, for we find Jesus in other places distinctly declaring these things. The Jews, as we are told by St. John, objected to him, "thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" And he took, in reply to this objection, the incommunicable name of God, the name which includes at once Divinity and eternity—"before Abraham was," he said, "I AM."² Moreover, he distinctly declared to the Jews that he was entitled to share in the Father's honour. He told them that he was constituted Judge, "that all men should honour the Son, *even as* they honour the Father."³ He declared with equal distinctness his unity with the Father; "I and my Father are one,"⁴ were his express words. His enemies sought to stone him for saying this, and left him little opportunity for explanation. But he had such opportunity just before his passion, with his chosen few. One of them then asked him, "Lord, shew us the Father." And what was his reply? "Have I been so long time with you," he said, "and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?—he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."⁵ Here is unity indeed. He who did not know that in seeing Jesus he saw the Father, is accused of not knowing Jesus! But the most remarkable testimony which Christ ever bore to himself as a Divine person and the Son of God, is found in the famous question, which as we are told by St. Matthew, he proposed to the assembled Pharisees. He first asked their judgment of Christ, and obtained from them the confession that he was the son of David. And then referring to the hundred and tenth Psalm, in which David says, "the Lord said unto my Lord, sit on my right

¹ Mark xiv. 61, 62.² John viii. 56—58.³ John v. 23.⁴ John x. 30.⁵ John xiv. 8, 9.

hand," he asked them, "how then doth David in spirit call him Lord?" But the Pharisees, being ignorant of the mystery of Messiah's person, "could not answer him a word." For that mystery contains the only explanation of this seeming paradox. The Son of God, David's Lord in right of Godhead, took flesh of David's daughter, and so became David's Son. With this explanation the difficulty vanishes: without it, Christ's question remains unanswerable, as the Pharisees felt it to be. His object therefore in proposing it is most evident. It was to shew these Rabbis their ignorance, and to lead them to search their own Scriptures, that they might learn who Messiah was.

II. Christ declared himself to be a messenger of greater dignity than prophets. "There was a certain householder," he tells us, in one of his most remarkable parables, "who planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen;" and "when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants" to receive it. But the husbandmen laid hands on them, beat, stoned and killed them. "Last of all, he sent to them his son, saying, they will reverence my son." But so far from doing so, "they said, this is the heir, come, let us kill him." "And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." It required no instruction to make this parable intelligible. The chief priests and Pharisees, as soon as they had heard it, "perceived that he spake of them." They perceived that his object was to pourtray the guilt of the Jewish people, who through the past ages of God's forbearance, had been misusing his messengers, and slaying his prophets with the sword. They perceived that when he spake of the son and his dignity, he referred to himself as a messenger more worthy of reverence than any who had yet come forth from God. Finally, they perceived that he meant to charge them with the guilt of consummated apostacy, because they were refusing to hearken to his voice, and were purposing to shed his blood. And what Christ thus declared in this place by a parable, he declared in other places without a parable. When he spoke of the queen of

¹ Matt. xxii. 42—46.

² Matt. xxi. 38—45.

the south coming from the ends of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon, he added in express terms, "behold, a greater than Solomon is here." When he spoke of the Ninevites repenting at the preaching of Jonas, he added in terms equally express, "behold, a greater than Jonas is here." And if with these and similar testimonies of Christ to himself the testimony of St. Paul to him in the opening verses of this epistle, be compared, Master and servant will be found to have spoken the same thing.

III. Christ declared himself to be the son of man, who had come, in the name of God, to us the sons of men. "If I have told you earthly things," he said to Nicodemus, "and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" He then proceeded, "as Moses lifted up the serpent, so must *the Son of man* be lifted up,...for God so loved the world that he gave *his only begotten Son*."¹ Now in these words, let us observe, Christ calls himself the only begotten Son of God, and the Son of Man. This union of Godhead and manhood in his person, is just the heavenly mystery which men are so slow to believe. And here it is affirmed by himself. But why did the Son of God become a Son of man? That he might have access to us the sons of men, and speak to us in the name of God. On this matter also let us hear himself. "The Son of Man,"¹ he said, "is come to seek and to save that which was lost."²

IV. Christ also declared himself to be the sacrifice by which our sins were to be purged, and by which a way was to be opened for us sinners to the bosom of God. His most emphatic declaration of this was at the last supper. We read that he took bread, and gave thanks, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "this is my body which is given for you." We also read that he took the cup after supper, saying, "this cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you."³ And we learn from his own testimony, that he purposed thus to offer himself, not for them only but for all. "My Father giveth you," he said to unbelieving Israel, "the true bread from heaven:" and again he said to them,

¹ John iii. 14—16.² Luke xix. 10.³ Luke xxii. 19, 20.

"the bread which I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."¹ By thus giving his flesh for the life of the world, Christ has become the revelation to us of the Father's love, our salvation, our way to God. We learn this also from his own testimony. "I am the way," he said, "and the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me."² But are all men welcomed to come to God by this way,—to rejoice in the truth of revealed mercy,—to receive the life which that mercy brings? "Him that cometh unto me" are the Saviour's own words, "I will in no wise cast out."³ With this we may well be satisfied. If human language means anything, these testimonies are abundantly decisive.

V. Christ declared that through faith in him we should receive this eternal life, should be made the sons of God, and should be exalted as his fellows and as the co-heirs of his glory. "He that believeth on me" was his express testimony in public preaching, "hath everlasting life."⁴ He also continually taught his disciples, and as many as believed on him, to think of God as their Father, and to regard themselves as God's children. "When ye pray," he told them, "say, our Father which art in heaven."⁵ He also said to them, "your Father knoweth what things you have need of:"⁶ and again—"little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom:"⁷ and again—"I ascend to my father and your father."⁸ And if we would learn what it is to be Christ's "fellows," his own declarations are the best exposition of the import of that blessed word. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood," he said, "dwelleth in me and I in him."⁹ Here is the essence of fellowship. For when we dwell in him by faith, and he in us by the Holy Ghost, he and we are one. Human language contains accordingly no terms more endearing than those in which Christ was wont continually to address his believing people. "I have not called you servants, but I have called

¹ John vi. 32, 51.

⁴ John vi. 48.

⁷ Luke xii. 32.

² John xiv. 6.

⁵ Luke xi. 2.

⁸ John xx. 17.

³ John vi. 37.

⁶ Matt. vi. 8.

⁹ John vi. 56.

you friends:"¹ and again—"I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid."² And as if the term *friend* were not sufficient, he called them *brother, sister, mother.*³ He did this while he dwelt with them on earth. And his putting off mortality and clothing himself with glory, made no change in the tenderness of his regard; his very first word, on rising to immortality, was "go to *my brethren*, and say to them, I ascend."⁴ His having ascended, is the pledge that they shall ascend; for they are co-heirs with him of his glory. This he distinctly promised. "Where I am," he said to his disciples, "there shall also my servant be."⁵ "When the Son of Man," he again said to them, "shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones."⁶ And this promise was not confined to them, but extended to all his people. For he declared in another place, that the servant who should be found watching, should be made, on his Lord's appearing, "ruler over all his goods."⁷ And again he promised in words of still larger grace, that he would "gird himself and cause them to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them."⁸ But it is needless to multiply quotations. These few sayings of our gracious Saviour, contain a testimony to the truths and promises of God's great salvation, more full, express and abundant than the most perverse unbelief can demand.

The dreadful doom of those who neglect it, forms no part of the gospel itself. But it is most instructive to find by examination of Scripture, that on this awful subject also, the Master confirms the servant's words. I will refer to two out of many declarations of our Lord. He described, on one occasion, in public preaching, the awful realities of the final judgment. He spake of those who should be found to have neglected his salvation, and not to have returned his love. He declared that in that solemn and tremendous day, he would charge their guilt upon them, from the judgment-seat. And did he say that their guilt should escape punishment? No: "the king shall say to

¹ John xv. 15. ² Luke xii. 4. ³ Matt. xii. 49, 50. ⁴ John xx. 17.
⁵ John xii. 26. ⁶ Matt. xix. 28. ⁷ Matt. xxiv. 47. ⁸ Luke xii. 37.

them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed;" and they "shall go away into everlasting punishment."¹ Such were the very words of him into whose lips grace was poured, who was anointed to heal the broken-hearted, and to comfort all that mourned. Nor did he speak thus on one occasion only. As he looked on Capernaum, the city in which he had been brought up, he said, "thou, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell."² These words testify at once to the greatness of God's salvation, and to the fearful doom of its despisers. Christ had preached the gospel in the streets of Capernaum; her children had been, by this preaching, exalted to heaven's gates; and nothing but their own unwillingness had prevented them from entering in. But they had neglected his mercy, and refused to enter in. According therefore to their exaltation was to be their bringing down: the exaltation had been to heaven, the bringing down was to be as low as hell. We have been, in like manner, exalted; and nothing but our unwillingness can hinder us from inheriting with the blessed. And if therefore we neglect this great salvation, Christ's words to Capernaum declare what our doom shall be.

Having thus obtained the solemn sanction of Christ's word to all the declarations of St. Paul, we may feel disposed to stop, and to say, in another sense indeed from the high-priest, "what need have we of any further witness, for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth." Since however it has seemed good to our Apostle to refer also to the testimony of his brethren, we shall proceed to consider very briefly, the statements of St. Peter and St. John. Such consideration cannot fail to be instructive; it will prove to us that God's testimony in the gospel is a harmonious whole. Let us read therefore,—

And was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

In his two catholic epistles, St. Peter has testified most expressly to the Sonship of Christ, to his atonement and its

¹ Matthew xxv. 31—46.

² Matthew xi. 23.

purpose, and to the dignity of the Church as called to the fellowship of his glory. He tells us that with two of his fellow-apostles, he was an eye-witness of the Saviour's majesty, in the holy Mount. And he adds that on that occasion, a voice proclaimed "from the excellent glory, this is *my beloved Son*."¹ By this one word, St. Peter stamps with the seal of his inspiration, the doctrine of St. Paul which we have just been considering. And he speaks on other points with equal plainness. Having told us that he was an eye-witness of Christ's majesty, he adds in another place, that he was a witness of his sufferings also.² And he declares that these sufferings were for the expiation of our sins—that the Just suffered for the unjust, to bring the unjust to God.³ He also testifies to the present dignity and future prospects of God's believing people. He entitles them "a royal priesthood,"⁴ speaks of them as being, through union with Christ, "partakers of the Divine nature."⁵ and declares that "the God of all grace has called them to his eternal glory."⁶ And that those to whom he was writing, might know the reality of these privileges and hopes, he speaks of himself as a partaker of this glory.⁷

So much for the testimony of St. Peter: we may now turn to St. John. But here the great difficulty is to condense our matter. For the testimony of St. John is beyond expression, large and full. He bears witness to Christ's Sonship and Godhead, to his manhood, to his atonement for our sins, to our dignity by reason of union with him, and to the glory which he has prepared for us. In the gospel which was written by him, he calls Christ by two names. He calls him "the Word" who is "God," by whom "the world was made," and all things that are therein.⁸ He calls him also "the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father."⁹ Divinity and Sonship are therefore, according to St. John, the same; and both belong to Jesus. And he is equally explicit on all the other points. He declares that "the Word was made

¹ II Peter i. 16—18.

⁴ I Peter ii. 9.

⁷ I Peter v. 1.

² I Peter v. 1.

⁵ II Peter i. 4.

⁸ John i. 1—3.

³ I Peter ii. 24; iii. 18.

⁶ I Peter v. 10.

⁹ John i. 18.

flesh and dwelt among us...full of grace and truth."¹ He was made flesh—he became a man, a real man, “of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.” Yet he was the Word, the Son in the bosom of the Father, “begotten before the worlds.” He also, according to the same testimony, gave himself for our sins. “If any man sin,” says St. John in his first catholic epistle, “we have an advocate with the Father...and he is the propitiation for our sins.”² And again he tells us that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”³ We have the same authority for saying that by faith in Christ’s perfect sacrifice we are advanced to the dignity of sons of God. “To as many as received him,” are St. John’s very words, “to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name.”⁴ And Christ’s own language does not express in more endearing terms, the nearness of the believing child to the Father in whom he trusts. “Whosoever shall confess,” he says, “that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”⁵ He has also presented himself to us in his gospel, as a living example of this nearness. We read that when at the last supper, Jesus said that one of them should betray him, “*there was lying on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples whom Jesus loved.*” That disciple was St. John. St. Peter therefore beckoned to him to ask their common master, “who it should be of whom he spake.” And we read that he, “*lying on Jesus’ breast,* said unto him, (evidently in a whisper)—Lord, who is it?” “He it is,” Jesus whispered back again, “to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it.”⁶ What a wonderful scene is this! Here we have *fellowship* with Christ in all its blessed reality. One of the younger brethren leans with fraternal confidence on his elder brother’s breast. And we learn from it, as no language could have taught us, the believer’s nearness to Jesus, and his nearness, through Jesus, to the Father of Jesus above. With this his present dignity and privilege, his hope of glory hereafter is intimately

¹ John i. 14.² I John ii. 1, 2.³ I John i. 7.⁴ John i. 12.⁵ I John iv. 15.⁶ John xiii. 21—26.

connected, for it flows from the same love. St. John has therefore joined these in one, in the last of his words which we shall quote. "Beloved," he says, "now are we the sons of God...and we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him."¹

Such is the testimony of these two apostles to those truths of the great salvation, which have been set forth to us by St. Paul, in the first chapter of this book. And they bear emphatic witness, along with him, to the impossibility of those escaping who shall at last be found to have rejected it. "If judgment first begin at us," says St. Peter, "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God...where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"² And St. John tells us, in the Apocalypse, of the dismay of all kindreds of the earth, in the day of Christ's second appearing; they shall call, he says, on the rocks and mountains to hide them from "the wrath of the Lamb."³ The wrath of the Lamb is wrath for rejected mercy—wrath for rejected salvation. But they shall call in vain. He comes then who made rocks and mountains, and whom rocks and mountains obey. The only refuge from the arm of his vengeance, is in the bosom of his love. And having despised that refuge when it was open for them, they shall not escape.

This comparison of the doctrine of St. Paul with that of his fellow-apostles, has of necessity been very brief; but we may make it more fully in private for ourselves. It will greatly confirm our faith, and enlarge our acquaintance with Scripture. It is true that the inspired documents to which we have referred, were not in existence when this epistle to the Hebrews was written. But that circumstance makes no difference. They contain the doctrine which from the first the writers had taught and delivered, to which St. Paul here appeals, in confirmation of his own.

Let us remember what this doctrine is. It is the doctrine of our Saviour's Godhead, of his manhood, of his atonement for our sins, of salvation and eternal glory through faith in him who died for us. These things have been brought before us in the last six lectures, from the words of

¹ 1 John iii. 2.² 1 Peter iv. 17, 18.³ Rev. vi. 15—17.

St. Paul in the first chapter of this book; and we have now learned them from the personal testimony of Christ, and from the testimony of those who heard him. I say therefore with humble but assured confidence, *they are the true sayings of God*. This, I know, is not popular language; the people of this generation are jealous of their liberty of thought and opinion beyond any who have gone before them. They are willing to hear the honest convictions of God's minister on any sacred subject, but they account it bigotry if he tells them that these convictions are *the truth*. Holy Scripture however commands him to do so. "If any man speak," says St. Peter, "let him speak as the oracles of God."¹ The oracles of God deliver only *solemn certainties*: God's minister then must do the same. Woe unto him if he do not, for the people committed to him shall not find salvation. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"² If a minister of God knows not with certainty the way which leads to heaven, he can neither address himself to it, nor invite others to walk along with him.

But blessed be God, these doctrines are solemn certainties. For they are written, as with a sunbeam, in God's word, and nothing but the most perverse unbelief can question them. And oh, seeing that they are so, what manner of persons ought we to be! What requital should we make to that Saviour who has died for us, that we through his death, might live for ever in glory! For the love which Christ asks from us, is not a mere sentiment. His love to us has been a reality, and ours to him must be the same. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Thus love always shews itself. And if love to Christ prompts in us the desire to do so, he will teach us the way. In the family, in society, in the world's business, in all states, places and circumstances, he will enable us to serve him. "And his commandments are not grievous;"³ they are a light burden, an easy yoke. Oh that there were such a heart in us!—we should then find rest to our souls. God give to us such a heart, for our present and eternal peace!

¹ I Peter iv. 11.² I Cor. xiv. 8.³ I John v. 3.

LECTURE VIII.

Hebrews ii. 4.

"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

WE have found in the last lecture, that to the doctrine delivered by St. Paul in the first chapter of this epistle, we have the solemn attestation of our blessed Lord, together with that of his apostles St. Peter and St. John. And we have now to learn, as the words before us declare, that it has still further witness, even that of God the Father and God the Holy Ghost, by signs and wonders from on high.

God also BEARING WITNESS ALONG WITH THEM, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and DISTRIBUTIONS of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will.

St. Paul here presents to us an accumulation of testimony. He brings forward, first, the testimony of Christ, then that of his apostles, then that of God the Father, then that of the Holy Ghost. And this fourfold testimony he brings to bear on one point, he brings to affirm one doctrine, the doctrine delivered by himself in the first chapter of this epistle.

The text contains two deeply solemn statements. It tells us, *first*, that God the Father and the Holy Ghost have set aside the course of nature, and borne special witness on the earth, by miracles and wonders and signs. It tells us, *second*, that this witness was *along with* Christ and his apostles;

intimating that what appeared in God's eyes so important as to call for it, was the holy gospel. It thus proves at once the truth of that gospel, and commends it to us as *a great* salvation. We indeed shall not escape, if we neglect that which appears to Almighty God, of such vast, such infinite moment!

We shall take these statements in order.

I. The Father testified *directly* by miracles, signs and wonders. On more than one occasion he spake audibly from heaven. He did so, at the baptism of Jesus.¹ He did so again, when shortly before his passion Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify thy name." "I have both glorified it," he said, "and will glorify it again."² And the prodigies which attended the crucifixion—the darkened sun—the rending rocks—the heaving earth—the opening graves, are to be numbered among the Father's signs. He also bore witness, and the Holy Spirit along with him, by the heavenly anointing which he shed down on the head of Jesus and his servants after him, and by the miraculous agency which was the fruit of that anointing. For the miracles of Christ were not, as some imagine, Christ's own attestation to himself and to his doctrine; they were the attestation of the Father and the Holy Ghost. "The Father who dwelleth in me," said our Lord, "he doeth the works."³ He did them by the hands of his holy Child, through the energy of his mighty Spirit; "I cast out devils," said Jesus again, "by the Spirit of God."⁴ That Spirit descended on him as he came up out of the waters of Jordan, "in a bodily shape, like a dove." And "being full of the Holy Ghost," he commenced his public ministry, "preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."⁵ The same Spirit descended on the apostles, on the ever-memorable day of Pentecost, in cloven tongues of fire. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness." And he who had witnessed with Christ, witnessed with them also, by stretching forth

¹ Matthew iii. 17.

² John xii. 28.

³ John xiv. 10.

⁴ Matthew xii. 28.

⁵ Luke iv. 1.

his hand to heal, and by granting signs and wonders to be done in the name of his holy child Jesus.¹ Now this, I repeat, was a twofold witness. It was the witness at once of the Father and the Holy Ghost. The Father witnessed as *the Sender*; the Holy Ghost as *the Sent*. And if to their witness *in act* be added Christ's witness *in word*, we have a threefold attestation to the holy gospel, the attestation of the blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Surely then, we are bound to believe it. We receive the witness of men, unless we have some reason to suspect them as deceivers, and "the witness of God is greater."² But it is much easier, some say, to believe the word of a man, which we are sure that we know and understand, than to receive the witness of that mysterious and incomprehensible Being who dwells amid the glories of eternity, far above out of our sight. If we say so, God has met this feeling, for he has condescended to include man's witness with his own. The statements and preaching of the apostles, as we saw in the last lecture, confirm their Master's words. They also confirm the witness of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. Jesus said to them before he left the world, "when the Comforter is come...the Spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and *ye also* shall bear witness."³ The gospel has thus a fourfold attestation. And he who disbelieves it, makes both God and man a liar. He disbelieves his God, speaking by signs in the heaven above and on the earth beneath: he disbelieves his fellow-man, though he sees him lay down his life to commend to his reception the message which he bears. Want of faith in the gospel is therefore the most unreasonable of all things. And it is not without cause that St. Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray for him, "that we may be delivered from *unreasonable* and wicked men, *for all men have not faith*."⁴

II. The gospel is the truth which this fourfold witness attests; St. Paul states expressly that God witnessed *along with* those who preached it. We saw, in the last lecture, what the gospel is. It is the truth that Jesus the Saviour is

¹ Matt. iv. 23. ² I John v. 9. ³ John xv. 26, 27. ⁴ II Thess. iii. 2.

the Son of God; that being so, he became for our sakes, the Son of Man; that his blood has made atonement for our sins; that we through faith in him receive remission of sins, the sonship of God and everlasting life. These are the truths which, as we saw in the last lecture, Christ and his apostles preached continually: these are the truths to which, as the text declares, the Father and the Holy Ghost have given their solemn witness. It remains now therefore that we inquire particularly *in what way* this miraculous witness attested the word of our salvation. I observe then,—

1st.—The prodigies exhibited by God the Father, were a direct attestation of it. It was an unquestionable prodigy when he opened the blue vault of heaven and so spake that he was heard upon the earth. And for what end did he thus set aside the course of nature? That he might bear witness *personally* to that blessed truth which is the foundation of our holy religion—that he might tell mankind, *with his own lips*, “THIS IS MY BELOVED SON.” He bore the same witness on the other occasion also. For again speaking audibly from heaven, in the hearing of assembled multitudes, he promised to Jesus support in his agony, and declared that the hour of darkness which was then coming on him, should be succeeded by blessed and everlasting light. For the sufferings of that hour, the heavenly voice assured him, should redound to the glory of God’s great name. But the prodigies exhibited at the crucifixion, were the most remarkable of all the Father’s signs. And if we ask what they signified, the heathen soldiers tell us. To them was committed the task of watching Jesus. And we read that when they “saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, TRULY THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD.”¹ And their conclusion was a just one; God meant to say so by these signs. The darkened sun—the rending rocks—the heaving earth—the opening graves—universal nature convulsed told that the heart of the God of nature was moved within him, that the bowels of the Father were troubled for HIS SON. But I observe,—

¹ Matthew xxvii. 54.

2nd.—The descent of the Spirit on Christ at his baptism in the Jordan, and on the apostles and brethren on the day of Pentecost, was a still more direct attestation of the holy gospel. The voice from heaven proclaimed him Son of God, but the descent of the Holy Ghost manifested him to be such. For it was the royal anointing, avouching him on whose head it was poured, to be Son and heir of the Most High. Moreover, by pouring it on *man's* head, the Father proclaimed in the face of heaven and earth, the amazing truth of incarnation—that manhood was now taken into God, and owned as God's begotten. It was besides, his anointing as the Saviour,—the Father's witness to his errand, and to the message of mercy which he came to deliver in his name. And when the same anointing was shed down on the head of the apostles and brethren on the day of Pentecost, this manifest participation of one Spirit, was an open attestation to the blessed truth of the believer's unity with Christ. The Spirit of their Father resting on and speaking in them, declared those who then received him, to be sons of God. And declaring them to be sons, it also declared them heirs; “for *if children*,” says St. Paul, “*then heirs, heirs of God*.”¹ In conformity with which, he tells the Ephesians that “the holy Spirit of promise” which they had received after believing in Jesus, was “the earnest” or pledge of their inheritance of glory.² The various gifts of the Holy Ghost which were the fruit of this heavenly anointing, are enumerated by St. Paul elsewhere. “To one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, the gifts of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues.”³ These precious gifts were seen in perfection in Jesus. His was “the word of wisdom” and “of knowledge.” Men marvelled at him, saying one to another, “whence hath this man this wisdom?”⁴ And again they said, “how knoweth this man

¹ Rom. viii. 17.² Ephes. i. 13, 14.³ 1 Cor. xii. 8—10.⁴ Matt. xiii. 54.

letters, having never learned?"¹ His too, was faith in its most conspicuous exhibitions. The gifts of healing and the working of miracles, were every-day manifestations of his power. He saw the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the woes of Judea with a prophet's eye; he warned her children of them with a prophet's voice.² He continually discerned the spirits and read the thoughts of men.³ Tongues with their interpretation were not indeed seen in him, because they were not needed: the gospel had not then passed beyond the limits of Judea. But after his ascension, it spread into all nations; and that gift then appeared in his apostles. And along with it, all the others now enumerated appeared also. For the Spirit, as St. Paul goes on to tell the Corinthians, divided them to every man severally, according to his will.⁴ These were the "distributions of the Holy Ghost according to His own will," of which the text makes mention. The members had each a share of what their Lord possessed without measure.⁵ Now this measureless anointing of Christ, was, I repeat, God's testimony to his true character and dignity: God told men by it WHO HE WAS. And the anointing of his people was for the same end. For it was not confined to the apostles; the whole Church received it.⁶ And God told men by it WHO BELIEVERS WERE: he proclaimed them as his children and his heirs; he shewed beforehand the place which they should occupy when the day of the manifestation of the sons of God should come. This outpouring of the blessed Spirit was therefore a direct attestation to the truth of the holy gospel. But I observe,—

3rd.—The miraculous works of Christ and his apostles, were, from their peculiar character, the most direct attestation of all. I say, from their peculiar character; for this, I fear is not attended to, nor understood. Men tell us that the miraculous works of Christ and his servants proved their Divine mission. But is this all? Had they cast the mountains into the midst of the sea and turned the rivers from their course, had they stopped the sun in his mid-circuit

¹ John vii. 15.² Luke xix. 41—44.³ Matt. ix. 6.⁴ I Cor. xii. 11.⁵ John iii. 34.⁶ Acts viii. 14—17; xix. 1—7.

through the heavens and compelled the moon to leave her place, these acts, confessedly above human power, would have proved equally a mission from on high. But would they have attested the holy gospel, as those miracles did which they actually wrought? If we answer that they would, we have not yet seen the peculiar and blessed significance of the miraculous ministry recorded in the New Testament. You are in circumstances of deepest affliction, watching by the pallet of a dying child. Some one enters your house, professing to have received a commission from God, and appealing to miraculous powers in attestation of his claim. What is your reply, when he asks you to acknowledge him? If you really possess, you say, those powers of which you speak, prove them by bidding my sick one leave its couch of pain. Miracles of another kind may speak to my understanding, but this will speak at once to my understanding and my heart. The case of the nobleman mentioned by St. John, is a beautiful illustration of what I now mean to convey. He sent for Jesus, beseeching him "to come and heal his son, for he was at the point of death." Jesus, to try him, answered, "except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." But the afflicted father said, "sir, come down ere my child die."¹ For he was not in that state of mind which disposes to sit in suspicious judgment on the credentials of a messenger; he was in distress and anguish, seeking aid from God. Now it was just that state of mind which the miracles of Christ and of his apostles addressed. They were not mere signs of power; they were works of love and mercy. They were designed to diminish the sad amount of human suffering, to heal the broken-hearted, and to comfort those that mourned. They were therefore a most significant attestation of a word of love, a most significant testimony to the truth of a message of mercy; and by them God appealed at once to the understandings and the hearts of men. This explains the reason of the heavy woes denounced by Christ on those cities, "wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not."² Their inhabitants had heard the

¹ John iv. 46-49.² Matthew xi. 20-24.

gospel from his own lips, and had also enjoyed the blessing of his miraculous ministry in the midst of them. Their sick had been restored to health, their lepers had been cleansed, their maimed had been made whole, their dead had been brought back to them from the tomb. God had thus spoken to them both by word and act, beseeching them to repent and turn to him. But he had spoken in vain. They had taken advantage of his mercy—of life, of health, of limbs restored, only to return again to sin. This was the fearful aggravation of their offence, and was also the cause of their fearfully aggravated woe.

But we have not yet searched the depth of this most interesting subject. Christ and his apostles healed the sick, raised the dead, and cast out the devil. Sickness and mortality are the consequences of transgression; they are the sign that the curse of God has descended on man as the wages of his sin. Christ came into a world groaning under these consequences of the fall—under pain, affliction, sorrow, disease, and death. He came into it, preaching the forgiveness of sin. And how did he prove his word? By setting men free from sin's bitter consequences. He preached the forgiveness of God, and as he preached it, he bade the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lepers to be cleansed, and the sick to leave their beds of languishing. Who does not see that these acts were the *natural* attestation of his word? A most beautiful example of this occurs in St. Matthew's gospel. They brought to him a man sick of the palsy, and Jesus said to him, "son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Some of the Scribes present accused him of blasphemy, alleging that he took to himself unwarrantably the authority of God. His reply proves the truth of what I have just declared. To shew them that he had authority from God to proclaim his forgiveness to a fallen world, he said to the sick of the palsy, "arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house."¹ No one who heard that word of forgiveness and witnessed the act which followed it, could possibly doubt

¹ Matt. ix. 2—7.

that the word was Divine. For the act was manifestly Divine: God only can absolve from the penal consequences of having sinned against him. And the act was the natural attestation of the word of absolution which had preceded it. This remark applies equally, to the miracles of the Apostles. St. Peter and St. John, as we saw in the last lecture, preached the forgiveness of sin. Do we ask for Divine confirmation of their word? They absolved men, in God's name, from sin's penal consequences. They took by the hand, at the beautiful gate of the temple, "a man lame from his mother's womb." And immediately on their touching him, "his feet and ancle-bones received strength, and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God."¹ And this was only a sample of what marked their entire ministry. The forgiving mercy of God was the word in their mouths, and the healing power of God attested it, by going forth from their very persons. For even the shadow of St. Peter passing by, restored health and vigour to the sick and languishing.²

But the forgiveness of sin was not the only truth of salvation which Christ and his apostles preached. They preached the hope of resurrection from the dead and of eternal life. And how did they attest their word? By loosing the bonds of death, and bringing the dead up again from the grave. The act, I have again to say, was the *natural* attestation of the word. We are, let me suppose, among the hearers of the Saviour. We listen to him, saying, "he that believeth on me hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." We follow him shortly after to the grave of Lazarus, and listen in breathless awe while he pronounces, "Lazarus, come forth." "And he who was dead comes forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes,"³ and walks into the midst of us, a living man. Which of us, after witnessing this amazing scene, could have doubted, without impiety, the truth of his word of mercy? Or let us suppose again, that we had heard St. Peter preaching "through Jesus, the resurrection of the dead." Your doctrine, we

¹ Acts iii. 6-8.² Acts v. 15.³ John xi. 43, 44.

say to him, is unwarrantable and presumptuous. He bids us, in reply, follow him to the chamber of Dorcas. We see the dead laid out. St. Peter turns to the body and says, "Tabitha, arise." The glazed eyes of the dead perceive the Lord's minister, she sits up, he calls the saints and widows, and presents her alive.¹ Then turning to us, he asks, is my doctrine presumptuous, or has it the attestation of the living God? But we are struck dumb with amazement, and can find no answer to his words.

Christ and his apostles preached besides, the final overthrow of Satan. Satan is our grand enemy, and the promise of his overthrow is an essential part of the gospel. St. Paul has proved in the first chapter of this book, that Christ is superior to good angels, for he has declared him to be their God and Creator. He is therefore of necessity superior to evil angels also, and able to cast them out. This accordingly was the doctrine which both he and his apostles preached continually, holding forth the hope of Satan's overthrow as the consolation of the church of God. And how did they prove their word? By casting him out on the earth, before the eyes of men. The act, it is needless to repeat, was the natural attestation of their word. The devil was permitted at that time, in the providence of God, to tyrannize in an unexampled and fearful manner over the souls and bodies of men. Let us take one example of this from the gospel of St. Mark. He tells us that a miserable father, whose son was possessed with "a dumb spirit," brought him to Jesus. But when the youth saw Christ, "the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." "This," said the afflicted parent, "hath come to him of a child, and oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters to destroy him."² But fearful as was this manifestation of Satantic power, it afforded to Jesus only an opportunity of shewing himself stronger than the strong one. He commanded the torturing fiend to leave the child, and his irresistible word was immediately obeyed. He committed the same power to his apostles and evangelists. After their first experience of

¹ Acts ix. 36—41.

² Mark ix. 17—27.

it, they "returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name."¹ Yea, Satan himself confessed,—“Jesus I know, and Paul I know.”² And who that was thus delivered from the power of the fell destroyer by the word of Christ and his ministers, could possibly doubt the truth of the same word, when it assured them of his final overthrow? Could Mary Magdalene doubt this promise of Jesus—she, “out of whom he had cast seven devils?” Or could the once miserable and distracted demoniac doubt it, when he was sitting clothed and in his right mind, at the feet of his deliverer? No, the act attested the word. This then was the peculiar and blessed significance of the miraculous ministry recorded in the New Testament. The Lord, and those sent forth by him, declared the forgiveness of offences, and relieved men, while they spake, from the consequences of having offended. They preached resurrection from the grave, and while they preached it, they raised the dead. They proclaimed the coming overthrow of Satan, and while they proclaimed it, they cast him out.

These signs, wonders, and divers miracles were yet fresh in the remembrance of the believing Hebrews; and they were witnessing daily the manifestation of the various gifts of the Holy Ghost. They must have felt therefore the irresistible power of the argument which we are now considering. As for the unbelieving, it left them without excuse. For while they did not seek to deny the reality of these miraculous signs, they saw not, alas, the glory of God in them, and so they made no impression on their hearts. And can we be surprised at this, when we read in the narratives of the evangelists, that it was so even with those who saw the miracles of the Saviour? Wonder—stupid wonder seems to have been the only impression produced. “The dumb spake,” says St. Luke, “and the people wondered.”³ That was all. The signs which revealed God were wrought before their eyes, and yet they died in their sins, from ignorance of his saving mercy. As St. Paul says elsewhere in his emphatic and awful language, “behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.”⁴

¹ Luke x. 17.² Acts xix. 16.³ Luke xi. 14.⁴ Acts xiii. 41.

Let not us be found among these stupid wonderers. Let us behold the glory of our God in the miraculous signs which established Christianity in the world, that we may believe the gospel which they attest. St. John tells us that the gospel is that Jesus is the Son of God, and that God hath given to us in him eternal life. He tells us further that he who believes it not, makes God a liar.¹ And it is most true, as we have learned from the consideration of this solemn subject. For he who believes not that Jesus is the Son of God, accuses God the Father of having uttered a lie from heaven, and God the Spirit of having descended from heaven to attest it. Moreover, he who believes not in God's gift of eternal life—that believers are through Christ made sons and heirs of the Most High, makes the awful scene of Pentecost a solemn falsehood. And he who believes not in God's forgiving mercy, in the hope of resurrection from the grave, in the coming overthrow of Satan and final glory of the church, accuses the Father and the Spirit of having lent their healing and life-giving energy to palm lies upon mankind.

But perhaps we say, we do believe the gospel—we dare not resist the Almighty thus speaking to us from heaven. Let us see then, that the glory of his mercy which these his miraculous signs were designed to reveal, shines into our hearts and captivates our affections. That mighty subject so interested the eternal Father, that he opened the heavens to speak of it. It so interested the Holy Ghost, that he came down from heaven to bear witness to it on earth. May it interest us also! May God be pleased to give to us one mind with Himself on this matter! So shall it be granted to us another day to behold the glory which he has given to Jesus—Jesus his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased.

¹ I John v. 10.

(See Appendix, Note C.)

LECTURE IX.

Hebrews ii. 5—9.

“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

THERE is a two-fold connection between these verses and those which have preceded them. St. Paul has just stated in the most forcible manner the impossibility of those escaping who neglect the salvation of the gospel. The word spoken by angels, he has reminded us, was steadfast; and how much more then, he has argued, shall that word be established which was spoken by the Son of God Himself—was confirmed as His testimony by them that heard Him—was attested by the signs of God the Father, and by the distributions of the Holy Ghost! This solemn thought is now enlarged upon. The Son of Man, whose word the gospel is, is Lord of the world to come, and everything in that world is in subjection under his feet. Whence then shall we go from his spirit, or flee from his presence? If

we ascend into heaven, he is there; if we make our bed in hell, behold he is there also. If we take the wings of the morning and flee into the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall his hand lead us, his right hand shall hold us. If we say, the darkness shall cover us, even the night shall be light about us. For the darkness hideth not from the Lord of universal nature, but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are to him both alike.¹ This is indeed a climax. Well may it be said—how shall we escape, if we despise him!

But St. Paul has been speaking also of the greatness of Christ's salvation. And on this thought he enlarges yet more. He declares, and proves for the satisfaction of the Hebrews, from the Old Testament Scriptures, that the glory of the world to come is reserved as the inheritance, not of angels, but of man. Man, and the Son of Man, he tells them, shall have all things put under his feet. And while he admits that this purpose of God is as yet unaccomplished, he points to the exaltation of Jesus, as the certain pledge of its accomplishment.

As this is the prominent subject of the verses before us, we shall now consider it in detail.

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the FUTURE INHABITED EARTH, whereof we speak.

God, as we have already seen, shall bring the heavens and earth out of the fire for which they are now reserved, as in the days of Noah he brought them out of the water. "Behold," he says by Isaiah, "I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."² "I saw," says St. John, "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."³ That new earth shall be inhabited; we read expressly in the Book of Revelation, that the devil shall be cast into the bottomless pit, "that he may deceive the nations no more."⁴ And in consequence of the destroyer

¹ Psalm cxxxix, 7—12. ² Isaiah lxv. 17. ³ Rev. xxi. 1. ⁴ Rev. xx. 8.

being chained, the moral and spiritual condition of these nations shall be very different from what it now is. "We look for a new earth," says St. Peter, "wherein dwelleth righteousness."¹ And God himself tells us by Isaiah—"they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."² Palestine shall then be the royal nation, and Jerusalem its capital, the royal city of the world. And the seed of Abraham shall be honoured of God to instruct the world in the knowledge of his name. "It shall come to pass in the last days," says Isaiah, "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." As they flow unto it, they shall say, "come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."³ And delivered from a deceiving devil on the one hand, and taught, on the other, to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and to know and love and serve the Lord their God, the nations shall be at rest and in quiet, and the whole earth shall break forth into singing. Such shall be "the world to come," this earth in the regeneration, when it has become God's kingdom, a place where his name is hallowed, and in which his will is done as sincerely, perfectly, and constantly as now it is done in heaven.

This "world to come" is not put in subjection to angels; they shall not bear rule over it in the coming day of glory. This dignity is reserved by God for Christ and his saved people. "I saw," says the prophet Daniel, "and behold one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days;" and "there was given to him dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him." What is thus bestowed on him, shall be bestowed on his people also. For

¹ II Peter iii. 13.² Isaiah xl. 5.³ Isaiah li. 1—5.

the prophet goes on to tell us expressly, that "the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High."¹ And with this testimony of Daniel all other Scripture agrees. The whole earth is bidden by the holy Psalmist, to "make a joyful noise before the Lord THE KING." The sea, the floods, the hills, the trees, the world and its inhabitants are invoked together. And universal nature is thus commanded to rejoice before Christ's face, because he comes TO REIGN, because he shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations upon earth.* And when he is thus exalted, shall his saved people be forgotten? No; the amazing discoveries of the Apocalypse abundantly confirm the prophet's testimony, and forbid us for a moment to think so. "Thou hast made us," they sing, addressing the Redeemer, "kings and priests, and we shall reign *on the earth*."² In verification too of this extatic hope, St. John saw them even in heaven, crowned, enthroned and waiting for their kingdom.⁴ And when the vision was transferred to the earth, he saw them in possession of that kingdom. His language is so plain that none can misconceive its meaning. "I saw thrones, and they sat on them... they lived and reigned with Christ."⁵ These Scriptures both explain and establish the testimony of St. Paul before us.

Of the glories of which we have now spoken, "the world to come" is the theatre. It is very important to observe this. For many persons, affixing a figurative meaning to these declarations of God concerning Christ and his people reigning on the earth, expect them to be accomplished in the world that now is. But this expectation is founded on misconception and mistake. St. John tells us expressly, that when the seventh angel shall sound, time shall be no longer, and the mystery of God shall be finished.⁶ He tells us with equal distinctness, that he heard that angel sound, and that "there were great voices in heaven, saying, the

¹ Dan. vii. 13, 14, 27.

² Psalm xcvi. 6—9; lxvii. 4.

³ Rev. v. 10.

⁴ Rev. iv. 4.

⁵ Rev. xx. 4.

⁶ Rev. x. 5—7.

kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”¹ That blessed consummation shall not arrive then in the world that now is. It shall arrive when time is no longer, when the present dispensation and day of grace shall have issued in the dispensation of judgment and the day of glory.

St. Paul, having thus referred to the world to come, adds, “whereof we speak.” For this is not his first reference to it: it has been the subject-matter and end of all his preceding discourse. He has told us of Christ being appointed heir of all things—of the heavenly host acknowledging him as Lord when he comes again into the world—of his throne being for ever and ever—of his sceptre being swayed in righteousness—of his changing the present heavens and earth by his word—of his people being heirs along with him. He has told us moreover, that angels minister to the saints. For angels, he goes on to say in the words before us, have no such heirship, no such hope. Dominion in that world of glory whereof we speak is not reserved for them. It is reserved for Christ and for Christ’s believing people.

But St. Paul was writing for Hebrews, and it became him to prove his words. He therefore refers to the Old Testament Scriptures.

But one in a certain place testified, saying, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.

The eighth Psalm, from which these words are taken, celebrates the glories of the world to come. It tells of a time when the name of the Lord shall be counted excellent in all the earth; when his praise shall be proclaimed even by the tongues of infants; when Satan, the enemy and avenger shall be stilled; when man, and the son of man,

¹ Revelation xi. 15.

shall have all things put under his feet. Nothing therefore could have been more apposite to the Apostle's purpose than the quotation from it here given : it was demonstration to a Hebrew of the truth of what he had just declared. But we must not forget, that he was writing for us also. And we shall be abundantly recompensed by a diligent examination of the precious Scripture which he here presents to our notice.

David is understood to have been the writer of this Psalm. Viewing with a prophet's eye the glories of the coming kingdom and the final exaltation of man, he bursts forth in admiration of the amazing goodness of God. "What is man," he asks, "that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" These expressions "man" and "the son of man," are not to be regarded as idle repetition. In the original Hebrew the verse reads—*What is miserable man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of Adam that thou visitest him?* Miserable man is man in his present sinful, wretched and mortal condition. But the son of Adam is the Lord from heaven, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Of miserable man God has been mindful, for he has sent his Son to save him. But he has visited the son of Adam with his peculiar mercy and most tender love. And both these Divine acts are celebrated in the words before us. These words, moreover, read to us a most humbling lesson ; for they speak of both as acts of condescension. The Son of God had so abased himself by assuming the nature of man, that the Psalmist exclaims, "what is the son of Adam?" But this abasement, through alliance with our lowliness, was chosen by him who loved us, that he might raise us to eternal honour through alliance with his glory.

The words which we have yet to consider, must be regarded as applicable to the son of Adam in particular, and to miserable man in general. "Thou madest him a little lower than (or, for a little while, inferior to) the angels." These words, it is needless to say, were fulfilled in the humiliation of Christ. The Son of God, the Creator of angels, was, while wearing our mortal nature, apparently

their inferior. But it was for a little while only. The Psalmist adds immediately, "thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands." And this was fulfilled when the Father raised Christ from the dead, causing him to exchange mortality and shame for immortality and glory, seating him also at his own right hand, and committing to him all authority both in heaven and on earth. The last words of the quotation, "thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet," yet wait for their fulfilment. They shall be fulfilled when Satan's power is broken—when all God's enemies are crushed—when death is destroyed, and when every intelligent creature whom God has made shall cheerfully submit himself to Christ's authority, and delight to do his will. The Psalmist writes as if these things were already brought about. We need not be surprised at his doing so: it is the genuine language of faith. Faith has no doubt of the accomplishment of the Divine counsels, and therefore to it the future is as certain as the present and the past. When David penned this psalm, every word of its contents was future. The humiliation and present exaltation of Christ were then as truly matters of prophecy, as his kingdom and glory are now. And yet all these things are presented to us as if they already were. I believe, from the whole style of expression, that the writer was privileged with a vision of the glory of the kingdom, and that he wrote as he has done under the impression of what he saw.

But, as I have already remarked, the words of this sweet Psalm apply to miserable man as truly as to the Son of Adam. If God has visited the one with his peculiar mercy, he has also been mindful of the other. God made man at the first a little lower than the angels. But it was only for a season, for his purpose even then, was to lift him far above them. And when Satan tempted man to distrust his Creator, and thereby prevailed to cast him down, his malice only paved the way for the accomplishment of this gracious design. For it brought about the wondrous mercy of incarnation, whereby manhood has been taken into God, and the sons of men are made the sons of God. And when the kingdom

shall come, the sons of men who have been saved by Christ, though the heirs now of wretchedness and mortality, shall be exalted with Christ their Saviour. We have a most touching example and blessed pledge of this in the case of him to whom Jesus said, "to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The son of Adam died on Calvary, and miserable man gave up the ghost beside him. But the words just quoted tell us that the mercy which visited the one, was mindful of the other in his lost estate—that the bosom of eternal love which received the holy soul of the Saviour, repelled not from its embrace his wretched fellow-sufferer. And this is but a sample of God's dealings with all who believe on Christ. Not one of them shall be amissing hereafter: they shall all be in paradise with their Saviour. This, I conceive, passed in vision before the Psalmist's delighted eye. He saw the glory, not of the Saviour only, but of his saved people. He saw man who was at the first made lower than the angels, crowned with super-angelic glory and honour, invested with dominion over the works of God's hands, and with all things put under his feet. And his design in the words before us, was to celebrate what he saw. And I have only further to repeat that if these words are received in evidence, they contain the most triumphant possible demonstration of what St. Paul has just declared to us.

The apostle reasons on the words which he has quoted.

For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.

The import of these words is amazing. They tell us that the Father has left nothing that is not put under Christ's feet. There is but one exception which is elsewhere stated by St. Paul—the exception of THE FATHER HIMSELF.¹ Every other intelligent being in his vast universe shall own the authority and submit to the dominion of the once suffering son of Adam. This may give us some idea, of what the throne of the world to come shall be. It shall be the

¹ *Corinthians xv. 27.*

throne of the universe; and this earth on which it is planted, shall be the head of the creation of God. Astronomers tell us of millions of worlds, of innumerable suns and systems. And perhaps myriads of intelligent beings are to be found in every one of them. But is this against the promises of God? No; it only swells the number of Christ's subjects, and adds to the extent of his vast dominion. And we must not forget that his people shall reign along with him. And as there is none above him, save the Father only, so there shall be none above them hereafter, save himself, their head and Lord. All else, from the highest seraph who stands in the presence of God, down to the meanest thing which his hands have made, shall take rank beneath them, and be put under their feet. Yes, the whole creation shall in the age to come, be put under the feet of man,—sinful, wretched, and mortal though man now be. The thought is too vast for human comprehension. Well may St. Paul call such prospects "so great salvation," and "a weight of glory!" And yet his declaration in the words before us, is only a legitimate inference from the words of David which he has cited.

The Hebrews might object that there was no sign of the accomplishment of these things with respect either to Christ or his people. St. Paul takes up this objection and answers it in the concluding words of the text—

But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

I admit, says St. Paul, that we see not as yet all things put under Christ. I admit that so far from his enemies being crushed, they are strong and mighty. I admit that so far from his people being now exalted and glorified, they are still heirs of misery, death, and corruption. We see nevertheless, the accomplishment in part of those gracious purposes of which this Psalm makes mention, which is to us a pledge and earnest of the fulfilment of those which remain.

Those parts of the eighth Psalm which, according to St. Paul, we see accomplished, are the prophecies which it contains of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. Its prophecy of his humiliation has been fulfilled, for we see Jesus to have been made a little lower than the angels, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. And its prophecy of his exaltation has been also fulfilled, for we see the same Jesus, for, or rather, through the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. And the accomplishment of these two prophecies respecting him is the pledge of the certain fulfilment of that which yet remains. As surely as he has humbled himself and has been exalted, so surely shall he sit on the throne of his glory with all his enemies put under his feet. This reasoning of St. Paul proves, let us observe, our interpretation of the eighth Psalm to be just. The Apostle takes it for granted that the son of Adam mentioned in that Psalm, is Jesus our blessed Saviour.

And does that which we thus see to be accomplished in him, contain in it any pledge of the future glory of his people? Yes; Jesus was humbled beneath the angels for a season for this very end, viz. that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. And if God has thus dealt with a world of enemies, what may we not expect from him when his kindness has made us friends? Besides, the same word in the mouth of his holy prophets which spake of the Saviour coming to die for us, speaks also of the glory prepared for his believing people. Nor is this all. Christ took part with us in our ignominy and lowliness, for the very purpose of raising us to the fellowship of his dignity and honour. The fulfilment of the one part of this Divine counsel, is the certain pledge that the other shall be accomplished also. And therefore as surely as Jesus died for us on Calvary and rose again to glory, so surely shall we his believing people sit with him on his eternal throne. I cannot, says St. Paul, bid you behold with the eye of sense Christ and his people reigning, inasmuch as that is reserved not for this world but for the world to come. But I can tell you that all things are ready, that the salvation and glory of

his people is provided for by Christ having suffered unto death and having been exalted, and that this blessed consummation tarries only till God shall speak the word. Meanwhile let what God has done for us in the past, encourage us to hope in him for the future.

This argument must have told, with peculiar power, on those to whom it was addressed. For the life of Christ in flesh, his deep humiliation, his lowly condition, his bitter and shameful death, were not with them, as with us, matters of history, but had passed almost before their eyes: the generation which had witnessed them, was yet living in the world. And the stupendous miracles wrought in his name, through the power of the Holy Ghost bestowed by him, were still, with the Hebrews, matters of daily experience. This accounts for the somewhat remarkable expression "we see Jesus...crowned with glory and honour." It denotes that his being so crowned was a thing beyond all question; because the abundant attestation which it was daily receiving from on high, made it to be so in the minds of all reasonable men. "He hath shed forth this" (Holy Ghost) says St. Peter, "which ye now see and hear;" "therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made" him "both Lord and Christ."¹ The life and death of Jesus are not so fresh in our remembrance, nor is his exaltation and glory now established by miraculous witness. But we have an advantage which compensates us. The truth of Christ's atonement has now stood the test of ages. And the watchful providence which has preserved the church for eighteen hundred years, and still preserves her, abundantly establishes the blessed truth that he who died on Calvary is now at the right hand of power. To us therefore, as to the Hebrews, it may be said, "we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." And we as well as they may be exhorted to look upon the accomplishment of God's promises in the past, as the pledge of their fulfilment in the future.

Let us pause then, and consider for a moment the blessed and joyful truths which the Scripture before us has presented

¹ Acts ii. 33—36.

to our notice. We have seen that for Christ and his people, God is reserving the throne of the world to come. We have seen further that it is the throne of the universe,—that they who sit upon it shall have dominion over the works of God's hands, and shall have all things put under their feet. THE CREATOR ALONE shall be above them, while creatures of every grade and name shall take rank beneath them. It is moreover God's gracious will that every one of us should sit in this seat of glory. The text declares that through the grace of God, Jesus tasted death for all of us. And the love which appointed such a sacrifice, can seek nothing but our eternal felicity. Besides, the death of Christ on our behalf has removed all that can hinder this felicity. It has taken away our sins, and the forgiveness of God the Father waits only for our acceptance. It has also obtained for us the Holy Ghost, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that we may live to God. Moreover, Christ took part with us in our lowliness, for the very end of raising us to the fellowship of his glory. His having done so, sufficiently proves his willingness to exalt us. And if then we are not exalted, nothing has hindered, but our unwillingness. The cross of Jesus testifies for ever that God would have miserable man to sit on high. It testifies for ever that if degradation and woe be his eternal portion, he has chosen and prepared that portion for himself. Let us pray then that God in his mercy may save us from making such a choice, and that he who is willing to bless us eternally, may give us grace to consent to be blessed!

LECTURE X.

Hebrews ii. 10.

"For it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

I NEVER addressed myself to the exposition of any portion of God's word under so deep a consciousness of the difficulty of the task. It is not that the words which we have read are ambiguous, dark, or obscure, for they are plain and easy of understanding. But St. Paul has crowded such a variety of the loftiest spiritual conceptions into so very short a sentence, and his words evidently imply so much more than they positively assert, that it requires very deep meditation to lay hold of each sublime thought by itself, and very great patience to arrange these thoughts in luminous and perspicuous order. May his blessing render this truly divine sentence profitable to us all !

The conjunction "for," with which the text commences, indicates at once that it contains a reason for some preceding statement. The preceding statement, as we saw in the last lecture, is that God is reserving for Christ and his people the throne of the world to come. And St. Paul has just declared that the death of Jesus, and his exaltation, through death, to glory and honour, is the pledge of the accomplishment of this gracious purpose of God. But nothing could be more offensive to Hebrew prejudices, than such a declaration. A Hebrew could not listen to it without asking immediately, if Messiah be indeed the Son of the blessed, and the Lord of angels, why should he have

tasted death—why should such ignominy and suffering have been his path to glory? St. Paul, in the words before us, sets himself, I conceive, to answer this two-fold question. He explains to the Hebrews that the purpose indicated in the eighth Psalm, of bringing many sons to glory, must needs be accomplished by God in a manner worthy of himself. His words evidently imply that the expiation of sin, and the cleansing of the heirs of glory, through the discipline of suffering, from sin's pollution, were absolutely necessary to its accomplishment. And therefore it was, he says, that Jesus the author of his people's salvation, tasted death; therefore it was that he went before his saved ones to glory through suffering, sorrow and shame. It became him as their Saviour to expiate their sins; it became him as their leader to tread the path which their Father's wisdom had appointed for them.

Such appears the general meaning and force of the words before us. When examined in detail, they present three statements to the mind. They declare something concerning God—something concerning his purpose—something of the means which it has seemed good to Almighty wisdom to use for the accomplishment of this purpose.

I. St. Paul here declares concerning God, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." All things are "for" God, inasmuch as universal nature exists to manifest its Creator's glory. The glory of God is his excellence: he is wise, loving, merciful and faithful; holy, just and true. And his works glorify him because they declare him to be possessed of these attributes. Though in our present condition we see but through a glass darkly, we can even now discern this to be the case. The structure of the human body and of the bodies of animals, yea, even of the bodies of insects as the microscope reveals them, testifies to God's wisdom. And the discoveries of the telescope, revealing to our astonished view unnumbered worlds, unnumbered suns and systems, all guided in their courses and upheld by an unerring and Almighty hand, testify to it yet more abundantly. Atheism itself has confessed this. One of the most famous

of the infidel astronomers of France gave it as his deliberate reason for infidelity, that no mind, created or uncreated, could have conceived the vast scheme of the universe! And if the universe thus testifies to God's wisdom, that part of it with which we are most acquainted, testifies equally to his love and mercy. For love and mercy alone built, love and mercy alone uphold for rebellious man, a world so clothed with beauty and so fair as this. To love and mercy alone we owe it that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, never cease from age to age. And the existence in the world of his redeemed Church—of a people saved from condemnation through Christ's death, upheld by his Spirit, and cheered by the prospect of glory, testifies to his mercy, his faithfulness and his truth. While the blessedness which is even now the reward of righteousness, and the misery which is even now the penalty of transgression, testify that he is the holy and just. This however is only partially the case at present, for we know little of God's works, and many of his ways are past our feeble comprehension. But it shall not be always so: the day is coming which shall reveal God face to face. The glories of creation shall then burst on the enraptured vision of his people, constraining them to wonder and adore. The glories of redemption shall also burst upon them, when those things are revealed to sight which God has prepared for them that love him. Hell too, with its fearful lessons of the yet untold malignity of sin, shall be bared to their astonished view. Nothing then shall seem mysterious, nothing then shall want explanation. Heaven with its blessed inhabitants, earth redeemed from the curse and from the hand of Satan, and hell beneath, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, shall then appear infinitely worthy of the God who appointed and made them, proclaiming him as the loving, the merciful, and the just. And satisfied that the Almighty has done all things well, saints and angels shall unite in raising the eternal anthem, "GLORY BE TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON, AND TO THE HOLY GHOST."

St. Paul tells us also that all things are "by" God. They

were created and are upheld by him, for the great purpose already mentioned, viz., to manifest his glory. Whatever is by God is also for him; nothing can continue to exist which reflects dishonour on the Creator. The wickedness of the world once came to such a head that in the judgment of God it dishonoured him. "And it repented the Lord," we read, "that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." And the decree followed immediately, "I will destroy man whom I have created."¹ This explains the words, "the Lord hath made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil."² For wickedness, though apparently now to the divine dishonour, is suffered by God to continue, that he may one day be glorified in its eternal overthrow.

Called thus into existence by his Omnipotent *fiat*, and sustained for himself, by his Almighty word, the Universe belongs to God. It appertains to him as the "Lord of Heaven and Earth" to order his Creation as he will, to bestow dominion, power, authority, as shall seem to his wisdom good. It is not that He needs viceregents to assist Him in his rule; He would bind His creatures together as bestowers and receivers of blessing. And therefore—

II. He has the gracious purpose of "bringing many sons unto glory." It is a very common sentiment that God has not told us what this glory is. He has told us, men say, that we shall be happy in heaven; but of the nature of this happiness he has not been pleased to speak. And the words of St. Paul that "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," are quoted in proof that this is true. But these words, form only the first half of a sentence—a sentence which ends with the emphatic declaration, "BUT GOD HAS REVEALED THEM UNTO US BY HIS SPIRIT."³ So far then from St. Paul approving, he utterly condemns this sentiment. To say that the glory of which he is speaking in the text, is a blessedness of whose nature we have no definite information, is to betray the most

¹ Gen. vi. 6, 7.

² Prov. xvi. 4.

³ I Cor. ii. 9, 10.

criminal inattention to the express statements of God's word. St. Paul is reasoning in the text, as he has been doing in the two verses preceding, on the quotation which he has just presented to us from the eighth Psalm. He has introduced that Psalm to prove that God designs to give to Christ and to his people, dominion over the works of his hands, and to put all things under their feet. And while admitting that this purpose is as yet unaccomplished, he has referred to the exaltation of Christ after his work of atonement for man's sin was finished, as the certain pledge of its accomplishment. Then follow the words of the text, which are designed in explanation of the necessity of Christ's sufferings. They were necessary, we are told, that his saved ones might be exalted to glory. For he, says the apostle, who made and sustains the universe for himself, and to whom by right it belongs, designs to set his many children as lords and kings over his vast possessions, and to constitute them rulers of universal nature. This and nothing less than this, is the glory prepared for the just. Well might David beholding it in prophetic vision, exclaim, "what is man that thou art mindful of him!"

God is no niggard of his mercies: he is reserving this glory for "many sons." Every similitude which nature affords has been exhausted by the blessed Spirit to set forth the multitude of Christ's saved people. They are compared to the drops of dew, to the blades of grass, to the dust of the earth, to the sand on the sea shore. St. John saw them in the visions of the Apocalypse, "a multitude which no man can number, of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."¹ And he heard the hallelujah of that multitude,

"Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices uttering joy."

God has been gathering these "many sons" from the days of Abel until now, and is still gathering them. The kingdom which has been prepared from the foundation of the world, tarries only till the last of them is sought and

¹ Revelation vii. 9.

found. It shall then be revealed and given to them as their inheritance. They shall go forth, according to God's appointment, to exercise rule, government and authority over the widely-extended provinces of their royal Father's dominion.

This appears to many, a carnal view of heavenly blessedness. They say that adoration and worship are the employment of the blessed, but that the prospect of authority and power has no charms for a holy mind. Far be it from us to deny that the adoration of the blessed God is the eternal joy of heaven's inhabitants. But why may not those who adore him, also govern for him? These two are not inconsistent. We read in the Apocalypse, of the enthroned elders casting their crowns at the feet of Jesus.¹ The act is expressive of adoring worship, but the worshippers are **KINGS**. The prospect which fills the holy soul of Christ with joy, ought surely to have charms for his people also. And the day of his **CORONATION**, as we read in the Canticles, is "the day of the gladness of his heart."² It is the desire of power for selfish purposes, which constitutes the wickedness of ambition. But it is prized by the holy and righteous for the opportunities which it affords of doing good. A king is able to encourage the well-doing, to relieve the oppressed, and to comfort the afflicted. "I have lost a day," was the saying of the Roman Emperor, when even one day passed without some of his subjects being blessed by him. The poet has beautifully expressed this sentiment. Speaking of a king relieving afflicted worth, he says—

"The monarch drank, that happy hour,
The sweetest, holiest draught of power,
When it can say, with godlike voice,
Arise, sad virtue, and rejoice."

This is at once the holiness of power, and the reason why power is prized by the holy. It is the reason why Jesus prizes it. For wherever his name is known, and his government extends, "men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed."³ And what applies to him, applies

¹ Rev. iv. 10.

² Canticles iii. 18.

³ Psalm lxxii. 17.

to his people also. In the world to come indeed, there shall be neither distress to relieve nor mourners needing comfort. But still we cannot for an instant doubt that God's people, when set over the provinces of their Father's boundless empire, shall bless unnumbered myriads by the exercise of righteous rule. Kings under Christ, and over his heritage, they shall govern for his glory, and for the blessedness of the universe which is subjected to him. And he who does not esteem this as a reward worthy of God to give, and of himself to receive with adoring thankfulness, is not like-minded with his Lord and Saviour.

III. We must now consider the means which it has seemed good to Almighty wisdom to use for the accomplishment of this purpose. "It became him," says the text, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." I have already observed, that God can do nothing save in a way which is worthy of himself. If his children are to be thus exalted, their Father must be glorified in their glory. The sovereign of these realms takes we shall suppose, convicted felons doomed to die, and sets them as viceroys, governors, lieutenants, over the kingdoms and provinces of this English empire. Thieves, robbers, murderers are invested with the highest offices. Or, to vary the illustration, the thoughtless, the ignorant, the untutored are entrusted with the affairs of state. Would such an ordering of the Commonwealth, be to the honour of the Sovereign of England? No, the well-conducted, the industrious, the peaceable members of the community would complain, and be justified in their complaint. Misgovernment not nearly so atrocious has, in past ages, hurled many a sovereign from his throne. And now, to apply this illustration, we the fallen children of men, are the persons whom God designs to exalt to glory. But we are all felons, convicted felons in his sight, and by nature doomed to die. We confess the truth of this continually; we pray, in the sanctuary, "from thy wrath and from everlasting damnation, good Lord, deliver us." And surely we are not praying to be delivered from that which we have never

deserved! We have besides by nature, the hearts of felons—hearts disaffected to God and his holy ways, and filled with all rebellion: And we are by nature, slow to apprehend the things of God, slow to believe in him, slow to love and serve him. Can God exalt us to glory whilst continuing in this condition? Can he give to us dominion over the works of his hands whilst the stain of unforgiven sin attaches to us, and we still abide in our wickedness and folly? No; God has created and must order the universe for himself: and such an exaltation of his people, dearly as he loves them, would dishonour instead of glorifying him in the eyes of his unfallen Creation. And therefore we read expressly in holy Scripture, “that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”¹ And again, we read “that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”² And again we are told by St. John, that “there shall in nowise enter” into Christ’s holy city “any thing that defileth.”³ Far be it from God, to exalt us in our sin and folly to the throne of his dear Son. In the expressive language of the Book of Proverbs, “as snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.” We are told in the same Scripture what is seemly for him—“a whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back.”⁴ And this is what our folly, if we abide in it, shall receive at the hand of God; we shall be cast down into eternal dishonour, and beaten with many stripes.

But if this is the case, we may well ask with the disciples, “who then can be saved?” For all are by nature in this condition of guilt and sin and folly, and the heirs of glory are taken from this corrupt mass. To this question Jesus answers, “with men indeed it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible.” He has appointed an expiation for sin, whereby pardon is obtained for his people’s accumulated guilt: he has appointed for them also the discipline of suffering, whereby, through their Saviour’s

¹ I Cor. vi. 9.² Ephes. v. 5.³ Rev. xxi. 27.⁴ Prov. xxvi. 1, 3.

grace, they are cleansed from sin and folly, and made meet to be partakers of his eternal inheritance. And therefore it was, in the wisdom of God, that Christ the Captain of his people's salvation, was advanced "through sufferings" to his perfect reward. These sufferings were needful for the expiation of sin. It was also needful that Jesus should have personal experience of sorrow, affliction and pain, that he might lead his people in the same path—the path which conducts to glory and to God.

This subject demands however a fuller elucidation. Christ is called in the text, the Captain or Author of the salvation of the sons of God. In other words, he brings his people out of their natural condition of guilt and misery, and makes them members of God's family. To enable him to do this, he laid down his life to expiate their sins, and even to the suffering of death, fulfilled on their behalf all righteousness. This work of atonement and of righteousness was indeed, as St. Paul has told us in the preceding verse, on behalf of all mankind. And through it the bosom of eternal love has been opened, and all men are made welcome to draw near to God and live. But to those who receive Christ by faith, his work is attended with infinitely more important results. To them it is salvation. "To as many as received him," says St. John, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God."¹ For when we are convinced of our lost estate by nature, and brought to rest unfeignedly on him "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,"² we obtain in the Divine faithfulness, the remission of all trespasses. Christ comes moreover, into our opened hearts, and taking possession of them by his Holy Spirit, makes us one with himself. We are thus freed from condemnation in his freedom from it, accepted in his acceptance, and sons of God in his sonship. And our Father shall be glorified in exalting us to share his throne. We were indeed by nature, convicted and hell-deserving rebels; but God remembers it no more against us, for we are now, through faith and union with Jesus, his forgiven and adopted children.

¹ John i. 12.² Romans iii. 25.

To ask whether it shall be so—whether God shall be glorified in thus exalting his many sons, is to ask whether he shall be glorified in exalting Christ himself. Is there any tongue within God's wide universe which shall impeach the worthiness of the Lord Jesus? There is none. May the challenge be safely sounded without any venturing to answer? It may. There is no tongue then which shall impeach the worthiness of his people. St. Paul has already sounded the challenge in their name, and dared the enemy to reply to it. "Who shall lay any thing," is his triumphant language, "to the charge of God's elect?—it is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?—it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."¹ And as long as he over whom death has no power, is found at the right hand of the Father, so long shall his people found in him be presented "unblameable and unreprouable"² in God's sight. This is a great mystery; but mysterious as it is, it is THE GRAND SECRET of salvation.

We have already seen that there was another reason for Christ passing through suffering to glory. Suffering is the discipline appointed by God for cleansing and purifying his many sons, the heirs of glory. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."³ God dwelt of old between the Cherubims, and they were made of beaten gold. And in this we see a type of the discipline by which he prepares that people among whom he is to dwell, and from whom his glory shall shine forth for ever. He subjects them to pain, trial and sorrow, brings them into difficulties and perplexities, exposes them to persecution and affliction, and thus weans their affections from the creature to fix them on himself. He also teaches them in this severe school to exercise patience, resignation, and faith; to cultivate gentleness, meekness, and every Christian grace. "We glory" St. Paul says, "in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."⁴ And the same apostle

¹ Rom. viii. 33, 34. ² Coloss. i. 22, 23. ³ Heb. xii. 6. ⁴ Rom. v. 3, 4.

tells us, that through this end accomplished in them, God's people are made meet for their inheritance. "Our light affliction" he declares, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."¹ God's way with his Church has been, and is in every age the same. Believers are not now indeed exposed to the rage of heathen persecutors as they were at the beginning. But still they have their troubles. One is stretched for wearisome weeks and months on a bed of languishing; another is made to mourn over domestic bereavements; while another is tried with loss of substance, and smarts under the contempt of a cold-hearted and cruel world. These afflictions are not indeed peculiar to the righteous; they are common to all men. But the wicked do not receive them from the hand of God; and so to them they bring no blessing, but a curse. For unsanctified sorrow hardens the heart, and is a foretaste of that which shall never end. With the believer however, it is different. He recognizes a Father's hand in all the afflictions which befall him, and is through them, by the blessing of God's holy spirit, conformed to the image of his Saviour. And thus, amid abounding trial and heart-breaking grief

"Every moment's calm that soothes the breast,
Is given in earnest of eternal rest."

Now the sons of God, while they tread this thorny road, stand in daily need of succour, sympathy, and comfort. They stand in need also of guidance when perplexed, and counsel when in difficulty. God bids them betake themselves to Jesus, the friend "that sticketh closer than a brother." "Behold I have given him," he says, "for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."² And well may the people of God betake themselves to him. He can afford them sympathy, for he himself was once distressed: he can guide and counsel them, for he himself was once in sore perplexity. His own blessed feet had painful experience of every step of that thorny way by which they are travelling,

¹ II Cor. iv. 17.

² Isaiah lv. 4.

and he knows every snare and stumbling block with which that dangerous path abounds. He is therefore a guide at once safe and merciful. For, as the text declares, it seemed good to the All-wise God to give to the Captain of his people's salvation a perfect personal experience of his people's condition. And no language can describe the consolation which is thus treasured up for them in him. The path which conducts them to glory may be rough, but they know that it cannot be rougher than the path by which Jesus travelled to it. They know moreover, that after a little while, a very little while, he who now keeps them from falling, will present them "faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy."¹ Exceeding joy indeed!—ah what tongue shall utter it? Jesus shall present his people, faultless because found in him, cleansed also and sanctified by the grace of his holy Spirit, and through the discipline of his holy providence. And as he presents them, he shall confess their names before his Father and before his angels. These, he shall say, are meet to sit on the eternal throne—to wear the eternal crown—to hold the eternal sceptre: I their Saviour am their guarantee that thou shalt not be dishonoured in having seated them so high, in having appointed them to so lofty a trust! We wonder, when we read of the just submitting to be stoned and sawn asunder, to be tempted and slain with the sword, to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.² But a glimpse of the glories of which I have now spoken is able to turn a bed of torture into one of sweet repose. Think you that St. Stephen regarded the murderous stones? No; he was occupied with something far different: he was seeing "the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."³

Let us see then that we be found in Christ, and that we be committing our souls to him as the Captain of our salvation. So shall his atonement and finished righteousness be our salvation in the coming day of the Lord. So shall all the afflictions and trials of this mortal life be blessed by

¹ Jude 24.² Hebrews xi. 36—38.³ Acts vii 55, 56.

his holy Spirit, to make us meet for his eternal inheritance. No words can express the desolation of that house of mourning in which Jesus is not to be found. There is no consolation, in such circumstances, in looking at the suffering before you; it appears simply as the wages of sin, the begun accomplishment of God's sentence on transgression. But oh how different are the afflictions of the righteous! One is comforted in witnessing their sufferings by the blessed assurance, that they shall one day give thanks to God for every pang which they are now enduring. We cannot expect to pass through this life without experience of its trials: days of darkness, be they many or few, must be awaiting all of us. But may God grant to us that believing in the Saviour, we may receive these trials from his gracious hand! They shall thus accomplish his holy will in us, and prepare us for the glories of his everlasting kingdom.

LECTURE XI.

Hebrews ii. 11, 12.

"For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee."

THE Apostle having made a statement so very offensive to Hebrew prejudices, as that the Son of God tasted death, and was advanced through sufferings to his reward, has just given a reason for this abasement on the part of the glorious and the blessed One. It was necessary, he has just declared, for the exaltation to glory, of the people beloved of God. But knowing that a crucified Redeemer was the grand stumbling-block of those to whom he was writing, he does not dismiss this matter with so brief a notice, but enlarges on the blessed theme. He declares in the words before us, and goes on to prove from the Old Testament Scriptures, that Christ and his people are "all of one." He deduces from this the necessity of the assumption of our nature on the part of the Saviour, and of his having passed through death. Again, he reminds the Hebrews that Christ came not to help the fallen angels, but to help the sons of men. And from this he shews them that "it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren"—that it behoved him to prove the utmost depths of human trial, suffering and sorrow, that having had personal experience of temptation, he might be able to succour the tempted. Such is St. Paul's argument to the close of this second chapter; and it brings to a conclusion, as we shall see hereafter, the first part of this epistle.

Having given this general view of the Apostle's meaning let me now attempt the detailed exposition of his words.

For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one.

To sanctify, is to separate from a common to a holy use. We are all by nature the servants of sin, the world and the Devil. And we are sanctified when we are separated from their service, to the service of God and of righteousness. Christ is the only Sanctifier. He sanctifies in two ways, by his blood and by his Spirit. His blood sanctifies, because it has taken away our sins, and has made approach to God on our part possible once more. And his Spirit sanctifies by revealing in the heart this Divine love and mercy, and gaining the heart to God by the power of the blessed revelation. For Christ thus turns our willing feet into the way of God's commandments, and by making us his servants now, prepares us to be his servants for ever. Sanctification therefore is salvation. And the words before us, "he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified," just mean, the Saviour and his saved people. If we express their meaning thus, we shall discover a very striking connection between the text and the verse preceding it. St. Paul has told us that it became the Father of his people "to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." And now follows the reason of this appointment. The Saviour and the saved, the Captain and the soldiers whom he leads to victory, "are all of one." And what more fitting than that the General should devote himself for his soldiers; what more fitting than that he and they, the servants of one Prince and Sovereign, should share together the dangers, privations and fatigues incident to his honourable and blessed service!

That we may fully understand however this apostolic statement we must specially consider the words, "are all of one." St. Paul has been speaking of God as the Father of many sons. He therefore now means to tell us that Christ and his people have one common Father. And because it is

so, they have a common race to run, a common enemy to combat, a common glory to win. The common race is the way of that Father's commandments; the common enemy is "the Devil and Satan;" the common glory is the kingdom which God has prepared for them that love him.

It is most important that we understand in what sense it can be said that Christ and his people have one common Father. St. Paul in the words before us is speaking of him as the God-man—the risen Saviour of the Church. And as such, let us ever remember, Christ is the Son of God by generation of the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," said the angel to his mother, "and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."¹ And with this agree the words of Christ himself. "Say ye of him," he asked the Jews, "whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?"² The Father sanctified or set him apart for his special service, and sent him into the world. He came into the world, taking our nature into union with his Divine person by generation of the Holy Ghost. And he is thus in humanity, as truly as in Divinity, THE SON OF GOD. Now in this spiritual sonship we his people are one with him. His miraculous conception and generation were indeed peculiar to himself, BUT THE HOLINESS OF HIS HUMAN NATURE HAD THE SAME SOURCE AND ROOT WITH HOLINESS IN US. The Father sanctified him for his service, sending him into the world, his Son born from above. And Christ sanctifies us in like manner, putting his own Spirit within us, and sending us into the world, a people born from above. This is indeed the grand characteristic difference between the true Christian and the wicked world around him. "Ye must be born again," is Christ's express declaration; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."³ And again he says of his people, "as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into

¹ Luke i. 35.² John x. 36.³ John iii. 6, 7.

the world." And again, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."¹ Jesus, when thus sanctified by the Father, and sent into the world on his high and holy service, had, as we have already seen, his Father's commandments to keep. In the power of the Holy Ghost he kept them. He had his Father's enemy and the enemy of his people to overcome. In the power of the Holy Ghost he overcame him. He had his Father's promised glory to win. In the power of the Holy Ghost he won it; for "through the Eternal Spirit" he "offered himself without spot unto God."² And the case, as has also been remarked, is the same with us his people. Sanctified by him our Saviour, and sent into the world, we have the same Father's will to do. In doing it, we have to overcome the same enemy who withstood our Lord. And the reward which is set before us is the promise of being glorified with him. Moreover, the same Spirit is our strength. In the power of the Holy Ghost, we obey and overcome and win; "for both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one."

They "are *all* of one:" the poorest, meanest, humblest believer is bound to his Saviour by this blessed tie; he is born of the same Spirit, and can look up to the same Father. Precious, unspeakable consolation! Stumble not, ye Hebrews, says St. Paul, at the doctrine of a crucified Redeemer. Think it not strange that for a people so nearly allied and so dear to him the Son of the Blessed stooped thus low. Think it not strange that he became one with them in their sorrows, their sufferings and their pains. For he and they "are all of one,"—all engaged in the service of one God and Father. And surely it became not him their appointed leader in his Father's holy ways, and in the contest with the enemy, to shrink back himself from the brunt of the battle. He was to be first in dignity and glory, and therefore it became him to be first in suffering, sorrow and shame.

But those to whom St. Paul was writing might ask some proof of his words. He therefore refers immediately to an

¹ John xvii. 16, 18.

² Hebrews ix. 14.

authority which they all acknowledged, viz. the Old Testament Scriptures.

For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee.

These words are taken from the twenty-second Psalm, and are most apposite to the Apostle's purpose. Was any Hebrew stumbled and revolted by the statements of the gospel concerning Christ's humiliation? Did any Hebrew listen to the statement that Christ and his people were all of one, and doubt the truth of it? Your own Messiah, says St. Paul in reply, speaking in your own Scriptures, acknowledges us poor mortals as his brethren, and speaks of himself as one of the congregation of the faithful, leading, in the midst of them, the worship of God!

This precious Scripture however, was not cited by St. Paul merely to meet an objection; it is full of instruction and most blessed consolation. We learn from it, as he tells us, that Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren, if his Spirit is dwelling in our hearts, and leading us in his holy ways. And the reason which the Apostle states for this condescension on his part, viz. that he and the sanctified are all of one, appears on the face of the Scripture itself. For surely brothers are the members of one family! Surely he who in the midst of his people shall lead their worship forever, acknowledges with his people one common God and Father!

But let us give to the words before us the special consideration which they deserve. They were spoken by our blessed Saviour on the Cross shortly before he died. He had been exposed to the onsets of Satan, and to the violence of the wicked, and God had hid his face from him. In these circumstances of accumulated and hitherto unexperienced sorrow, he had been pouring forth his soul in prayer. But before he resigned his spirit, light broke in upon his darkness, and the consolations of God returned. And the

first expressions of his thankfulness to him who had listened to his cry, were in the words before us, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." For even in that awful hour, in pouring forth his gratitude to the Father, the Saviour thought of us. If he promised to declare his name, it was to his brethren: if he vowed to proclaim his praise, it was in the midst of his saved people.

The name of God, as recorded in holy Scripture, is "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."¹ Jesus had personal experience of this name. He was charged with our transgressions, and the Father had not cleared the guilty. Still he had not forsaken him. When overwhelmed with sorrow and anguish, when amazed with grief,² Jesus had found him merciful and gracious, yea abundant in goodness and truth. And his acceptance of the offering for our sins, intimated to his dying child by the light which broke in upon his darkness even before his passion ended, proclaimed him as long-suffering, forgiving iniquity and transgression. This then was the name which Jesus was to declare to his brethren—the Father's HOLINESS, the Father's MERCY and LOVE. But when was he to declare it? The words which we are now considering, cannot refer to his personal ministry on earth; it was ended before he uttered them. They refer to his ministry in glory from the day of his resurrection till now. He began to perform this vow as soon as he rose from the dead. "Go, tell my brethren," was his first word on leaving the tomb, "that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."³ And when they met him there, he remained with them forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."⁴ He also "opened their understandings, that they should understand the Scriptures," and "expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself;"⁵

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.² Mark xiv. 33.³ Matt. xxviii. 10.⁴ Acts i. 3.⁵ Luke xxiv. 27, 46.

for in him the Father is declared. Nor did his ascension put a period to this blessed work: he has been engaged in it ever since, and is engaged in it still. All who in any generation, have known the Father's name, and all who know it now, have learnt it from his teaching. None else is competent to teach it. For "no man," Jesus himself declares, "knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."¹ This blessed work is Christ's delight. Grateful love to the Father, and compassionate love to us, combine to make it so. He therefore invites us to come and learn of him. And if we take Mary's place, sitting at his feet to hear his word, we are choosing "that good part which shall not be taken away" from us.² It is a good part indeed; blessed are they who are taught by him. His is a brother's teaching. He looks with a brother's love on those whose hearts have been opened to receive his Spirit, and takes a brother's interest in their progress in the knowledge of God. He has also a brother's patience with their slowness and inaptitude to learn. And by the grace of his holy Spirit he quickens that slowness and overcomes that inaptitude, making his word, his sacraments and all his ordinances conducive to their advancement in the knowledge, and establishment in the ways of God.

But the teaching which Christ vouchsafes to his people by his Spirit now, is only the beginning of the performance of this vow. It relates, as the latter part of it may shew us, rather to eternity than to time; for eternity alone affords scope and opportunity for its discharge. And it shall be discharged then. He who owned his saints as brethren while clothed with their mortal nature, and also after resurrection from the dead, will own them as brethren when the glories of the kingdom are revealed.³ It shall also be his delight, through the ages of eternity, to declare to them the Father's name. The theme on the one hand, is infinite, and eternity shall not exhaust it. And no limit can be set, on the other, to the capacities of the glorified spirit. They shall be enlarging through eternal ages, and still, as they

¹ Matt. xi. 27.² Luke x. 42.³ Matt. xxv. 40, 45.

enlarge, they shall be filled with God, as their infinite and satisfying object. But the invisible Father shall never be known save in and through the Son ; and therefore as Jesus shall delight to teach, his people shall delight to learn of him. They shall sit eternally at his blessed feet, and listen to his wondrous revelations without weariness and without satiety. In what an engaging aspect does this present to us the happiness of the heavenly world ! It was set forth in the two last lectures, in quite a different aspect ; crowns, thrones, and sceptres, were then presented to us as the heritage of the just. But methinks what is now presented seems more desirable still. Let us suppose that before the patriarch Abraham closed his eyes in death, we had been privileged to sit at his feet, and to be instructed by him in the knowledge of Abraham's God. He communicates to us the results of the personal experience of an hundred years. He tells us how at God's word he left Ur of the Chaldees, and sojourned in Canaan, in Egypt, and in Gerar. He tells us how faithful and true to his promises, how gracious, how considerate, and how merciful he has ever found Jehovah. And he passes in review before us the history of his eventful life, bidding us read in it the Divine character, and behold in it the Divine glory. Such a communication, I need not say, would have been esteemed by us a special privilege. But it is not worthy of mention compared with the privilege which is reserved for the redeemed hereafter, when they shall sit at the feet of Jesus, looking up into his face as into the face of an elder brother, and listening to his revelations of God. He shall tell them how he has known him from eternity, how he lay in his bosom before the worlds were. And especially shall he tell them how he proved, when in their mortal flesh, his faithfulness, his mercy and his love. He shall recount his eventful experience from his leaving the womb of Mary and entering this world of sorrow, to his leaving the womb of the grave and re-entering the world of joy. And as he recounts it, he shall bid them read in it the Father's character, and behold in it the Father's glory. Who will not say that such a privilege is heaven indeed !

Who will not esteem all things loss to be counted worthy at length to partake therein !

In this our present sinful condition, even Divine knowledge too often rests as a barren speculation in the understanding. It shall not be so in heaven : knowledge there shall always affect the heart. As Jesus teaches his people to know the Father, he shall also teach them to worship and adore him ; yea, in this blessed employment he shall be himself their example. What says his vow on Calvary ? Let us read the remainder of his words, "in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee." This vow shall be performed. From the midst of the redeemed who sit around him, and listen in breathless interest to his revelations of the Father's goodness, ever and anon shall the Redeemer rise, and taking in his hand his golden harp, shall tune it to the Father's praise. And his melodious voice, "like the sound of many waters," shall give forth the heavenly measure, and raise the heavenly song. Nor shall his redeemed be slow to follow him. They have "every one of them harps,"¹ and shall learn of him to tune them. They shall also catch from his lips the measure and fall into the strain, nor shall one jarring note disturb the harmony of heaven. How overwhelming is the contemplation of such wonders ! And let no one say, that these things cannot be—that Jesus cannot be at once worshipped and a worshipper. It seems indeed a contradiction, but it is not ; for he possesses a twofold nature, and is invested with a twofold office. He is the Son of God, the Creator of all things, and as such, is the object of worship. He is the Son of Man, the pattern to the sons of men of all that is good and excellent ; "the first-born of every creature,"² that he may lead up every creature to the worship of the Father of all. He is also God's Melchizedec—King and Priest. As King, he is adored ; for a voice from the oracle proclaims, "let all the angels of God worship him."³ And as Priest, he renders that, which as King, he receives. A priest not worshipping, is indeed a contradiction. And God hath sworn and will not repent that Jesus is a Priest for ever.⁴

¹ Rev. v. 8.² Coloss. i. 15.³ Hebrews i. 6.⁴ Psalm cx. 4.

And we are not falling into the snare of being wise above what is written, because we search into these things. Holy Scripture is full of them. Whether we read the records of our Saviour's life in flesh, or attend to the intimations given to us of his employment now in the blessed regions above, or ponder the glorious visions of the kingdom, we find them plainly revealed. We are expressly told that while on earth, he both accepted and rendered worship. When on one occasion he had displayed the power of his Father in stilling the raging sea, his disciples "came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth thou art the Son of God."¹ And again, after his resurrection, "they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him."² But he rendered worship also. St. John tells us, "these words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son."³ St. Luke says, that "when he was praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray."⁴ And both St. Matthew and St. Mark concur with St. Luke in saying that Jesus "fell on his face" in dark Gethsemane, "and prayed, Abba Father, remove this cup from me."⁵ For he was then in suffering and sorrow, and prayer was the worship suited to his circumstances. But let us follow him from earth to heaven, and we shall find that prayer exchanged for praise. Even while the redeemed cast their crowns at his feet, adoring him, "they sing," St. John tells us, "THE SONG OF THE LAMB."⁶ The Lamb then has a song which his people learn of him. Yes, he has many songs. The Book of Psalms which is filled from one end to another with expressions of adoration and thanksgiving, of which he is the object, is filled also with his own songs of praise. We read in one Psalm, "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation."⁷ And in another, "I will extol thee, oh Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me."⁸ And in another still, "oh God,

¹ Matthew xiv. 33.² Matthew xxviii. 9.³ John xvii. 1.⁴ Luke xi. 1.⁵ Matt. xxvi.; Mark xiv.; Luke xxii.⁶ Rev. xv. 3.⁷ Psalm cxi. 1.⁸ Psalm xxx. 1.

my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise even with my glory: awake, psalter and harp, I myself will awake early."¹

It is not difficult to discover the meaning of these songs. We have just learned from the Book of Revelation, which, in this particular, is in most beautiful harmony with the text, that the redeemed are taught by their Redeemer to sing the praise of God. We are taught by the same book that none but the redeemed can sing their song.² For those only can understand it who have been in distress and extremity, and have known by experience the mercy and deliverance of the Lord. This then is the reason why Jesus at once sings himself, and is the leader of his people's praise. He was indeed in distress and extremity; he indeed knows by experience, what the Father's mercy is. He was delivered by him from the violence of man, and from the hand of Satan; from the power of the curse also, and from the cold grasp of death and the grave.³ This explains the bursts of gratitude with which the Psalms are filled; the Father's loving child can never forget these mercies. In a Psalm which expressly refers to them, we find him saying, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing, thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee and not be silent: oh Lord my God, I will give thanks to thee for ever."⁴

And it shall be no derogation from the glory of the Saviour that he thus appears for ever as a worshipper; it shall only commend him to heaven's blessed inhabitants as the worthier object of worship. They shall be privileged to behold that head which was crowned with thorns on Calvary, encircled with the diadem of eternal dominion, and they shall fall on their faces and adore. And when they also behold those hands which were nailed to the bitter cross, sweeping the strings of the golden harp, they shall recognize him, amid his glories, as the meek and lowly Jesus still, and they shall only sing the louder, "WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN."

¹ Psalm cviii 1, 2.

² Rev. xiv. 3.

³ Title of 16th Psalm, Horsely.

⁴ Psalm xxx. 11, 12.

This subject is full both of consolation and of warning. The Old Testament and the New combine to assure us that Jesus is not ashamed to call his people brethren, yea, that he acknowledges himself as one of them. How precious then in his eyes, must be the grace of the Holy Spirit and the image of God which that Spirit forms in us! For it is this which constitutes such brotherhood and blessed unity. And while the value which he sets on this image of God in us appears now, and is declared in the holy gospel, we have learned from the subject before us that it shall appear more abundantly in the world of glory. For then in everlasting testimony to this link between the Saviour and the saved, he shall dwell in the midst of them as a brother among brethren, as the Chief Musician and sweet singer of Israel. Are we then united to the Saviour by this link?—have we received into our hearts his Holy Spirit?—are we indeed the children of “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?” If not, he will be ashamed of us. And instead of owning us as brethren, he will say, “I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Ah, the nominal professor and cold-hearted formalist shall then weep bitterly. But they shall weep in vain. The Saviour’s decree is peremptory, and his mind is unalterable, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”¹

Let us then earnestly seek to be sanctified indeed. We cannot sanctify ourselves; but let none be discouraged by this as if it were a hard saying. The greatest hindrance to our sanctification, is our imagining that by our own efforts we can accomplish it. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;” and so long as this perverse imagination remains in us, we shall never apply to the Saviour. We have no reason then to be discouraged, but rather to thank God, if he has taught us to know our sickness—if he has made us to feel that our hearts are at enmity with him, and that self-renewal is as impossible as for the Ethiopian to change his skin. For if this conviction is followed by an honest surrender of these bad hearts to

¹ Hebrews xii. 14.

Christ, nothing shall hinder the Saviour from taking possession of them by his Holy Spirit, and hallowing them as his eternal abode. We shall be taught of that Spirit to know the value of redeeming love, and to experience the riches of redeeming mercy; we shall be prepared to sing the praises of the loving and the merciful One in the world of light above. Blessed for ever and ever is the man to whom such a privilege shall be granted! For there the Son of God himself presiding shall lead the melody and animate the song.

LECTURE XII.

Hebrews ii. 13—15.

“And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I, and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

IN the first of the verses which we have now read, St. Paul continues to prove, by further reference to Old Testament Scripture, the oneness between Christ and his people. He then proceeds in the two remaining verses, to demonstrate from this oneness the necessity which was laid on the Saviour, of assuming their mortal nature and of passing through death. That the all-glorious Messiah should have done so was the very truth which the Hebrews were so slow to receive. It was the very truth therefore in which St. Paul was now seeking to confirm and establish them.

We shall begin by examining the argument here addressed to the Hebrews, and then seek to draw from this precious Scripture instruction and edification for ourselves.

St. Paul continues his citations, “and again, I will put my trust in him, and again, behold I and the children which God hath given me.” The first of these expressions occurs in the second verse of the eighteenth Psalm. The whole passage reads thus—“I will love thee, oh Lord, my Strength: the Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler and the

horn of my salvation and my high tower." And the Hebrews without hesitation acknowledged this to be a Psalm of Messiah. The other expression occurs in the eighteenth verse of the eighth chapter of Isaiah. It is doubtful whether the Hebrews regarded it as the language of Messiah himself or of the prophet. But the matter is of no importance. For if the prophet used this language in reference to himself and his remarkable children, he used it as the type of Christ; and the ultimate reference of the words is to Messiah and his people. If the Hebrews had not been satisfied of this, St. Paul would not have adduced the quotation

Let me now point out the meaning and force of these quotations, and explain the argument which follows them. I have shewed to you already, says St. Paul, that Messiah, speaking in your own Scriptures, acknowledges his people as brethren; now I shew to you that he calls them children also. But if they are brethren and children, they are partakers of the same nature and of the same life with him who is at once their father and their elder brother. I have introduced Messiah declaring in your own Scriptures that he shall one day praise God in the midst of the church; now I introduce him declaring that his condition shall be one of confidence in that God, and dependance on him continually. He shall trust in God, he tells you, that he may receive deliverance; he shall praise God, he also tells you, for that deliverance when vouchsafed to him. And it is evident that he shall do this as the example of his people, who led by the impulse of the same nature, shall follow his sacred footsteps. But these his divine declarations could have been accomplished only through his assuming their humanity and laying down his life for them. He could not have been their example of confidence in God, having never himself needed to trust in him; he could not have been their example in praising him, having never himself received deliverance. Moreover these children and brethren of Christ were by nature under condemnation, and Satan their enemy had a right to demand of the justice of God, that they should be adjudged for their sins, to eternal death. Before they could

be taught to trust in God and praise him, it was absolutely necessary that their condemnation should be removed, and that their accuser should be silenced. And this could have been accomplished only through their Saviour's death. "Forasmuch then," the apostle continues, "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil."

St. Paul greatly strengthens this argument by stating as another purpose of the death of Christ, "and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The persons referred to are the Old Testament saints, who, because of the darkness of that dispensation, had lived and died in bondage, having no assured peace with God. The Hebrews expected the deliverance of the souls of these deceased saints from Hades, as one of the glorious acts of Messiah; for the commentaries of the Rabbis declare plainly that this was the faith of the Jewish church. But he cannot deliver your sleeping fathers, says St. Paul, except he expiate their sins. And why then, he asks, do you stumble at the doctrine of a humbled and suffering Redeemer? Without humiliation and death it is impossible on the one hand, that he can be the glorious example of his people, and equally impossible, on the other, that he can perform those acts of glorious power for their deliverance which your nation expects of Messiah.

Having thus attempted to explain the argument of St. Paul, I will endeavour, by God's help, to unfold the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which this precious Scripture contains.

And again, I will put my trust in him.

It has been mentioned already that the Hebrews ascribed to Christ the Psalm from which these words are taken. There can be no doubt that they were right in doing so: its contents plainly shew it to have been his triumphant song when the Father raised him from the dead. "I will love

thee," he exclaims in holy gratitude, "oh Lord, my strength." And then in recompense of the Father's goodness, he vows eternal trust in him as his rock, his fortress, his deliverer, his God, his strength, his buckler, the horn of his salvation, and his high tower! These words are full of instruction. They reveal to us the prominent feature of the Saviour's character—the feature which will distinguish it for ever, CONFIDENCE IN GOD. For doubtless he keeps this vow. And therefore though surrounded now with the glories of eternity, and participating in the honours of Deity, he still trusts in the Father. "For the King trusteth in the Lord," we read, "and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved."¹ And if this feature marks his character in heaven, surely it must have marked it yet more distinctly on the earth. If the glorified Son of God trusts in the Father, surely the lowly Jesus of Nazareth depended on him continually. Let us listen to his own words. "Thou art He," he exclaims, "that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope when I was on my mother's breasts: I was cast on thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly."² Let us listen to his language in another Psalm. Speaking of his persecutors he says, "for my love they are my adversaries, but I am all prayer."³ And in the immediate context in this eighteenth Psalm, we shall find a most striking proof and beautiful illustration of the same precious truth. The Son of God risen from the dead looks back on his life of sorrow, suffering and trial, and on his death of agony and shame. "The sorrows of death compassed me," he says, "and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." But he also tells us how he found deliverance and escape, "in my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God, he heard my voice out of his temple." These words suggest an illustration. The lamb on the mountain-side shrinks at the wintry blast. And coming to the foaming mountain-torrent, it fears to venture through. But the shepherd takes it in his arms and carries it across. It looks upon the raging waters and is afraid, but its fear

¹ Psalm xxi. 7.² Psalm xxii. 9, 10.³ Psalm cix. 4, Horsley.

makes it only cling the closer to those arms which encircle and protect it. And soon, in safety on the opposite bank, it looks back on the object of its dread. Christ is "the Lamb of God." The Father his Almighty shepherd tended him, carrying him in his arms, and sheltering him in his bosom continually. And when the hour and power of darkness came, and the floods of the ungodly made that Lamb afraid, he fled for shelter to those arms of love, "I am not alone," he said, "the Father is with me."¹ And the Father who was with him bore him through. The floods of the ungodly, and the dark river of death are now passed for ever, and the Lamb "in the midst of the throne" proclaims his Deliverer's praise. The faith of Jesus has thus met with its reward; it has issued in thanksgiving. And as he trusts in the Father for ever, he shall be rewarded eternally with renewed cause for thanksgiving. Nor shall it be otherwise with his people. The faith which he teaches them to repose in God now, shall issue, another day, in songs of praise. Taught also by his Spirit and after his example to trust in the Lord for ever, they shall have eternal cause to extol and magnify his name.

This leads us to consider the other citation of St. Paul.

And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

A father is the author of life to his children, and the life which he communicates is his own. God has given to Christ to be the Father of children, and these children are begotten in his own likeness, and after his own image. We have already seen what Christ's likeness and image are. Holy confidence in God, holy gratitude and thankfulness, are the prominent features of his perfect character. And this is the character which he forms by his holy Spirit in his children. St. Paul assigns this as Christ's object in bringing himself and his brethren into trouble. "Always bearing about in the body," he says, "the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the

¹ John xvi. 32.

life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." And again he says with more distinctness, "we which live, are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." And what was this life of Jesus? "The same spirit of faith," says St. Paul; and then quoting his Lord's words, "I believed and therefore have I spoken," he adds, "we also believe and therefore speak."¹ And if in this severe school they learned to trust in God as Christ did, they also learned in it to praise him. Assured that the faithfulness of God would make present sorrow to issue in eternal joy, they gloried in tribulations. And being caused in these tribulations, to experience God's merciful deliverances, they praised while they trusted, and trusted while they praised. Christ blessed the troubles of his people in this way, to form in them his own character; and they were known as his children on the earth. Now his way with his people is the same still. And when the character which he thus forms in them on earth, appears in perfection in the heavenly kingdom, they shall be known as his children for ever. Repine not then, oh believer, that thou art brought into trial, and made to experience sorrow. Christ brings thee into his own circumstances, that he may teach thee to trust thy God, and give thee cause to praise him. He would also thus prepare thee for dwelling with him hereafter, known by thy family-likeness to be one of those whom he has begotten to himself.

St. Paul proceeds,—

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.

These words contain the only answer which can be given to a question of deep importance and interest, which the preceding verses suggest. For we cannot give due consideration to the statements which have just been made concerning Christ as the example of his people, and compare them with other statements of St. Paul in this epistle concerning his

¹ II Corinthians iv. 10, 11, 13.

eternal Godhead, without serious difficulties occurring to the mind. Can God depend on another—can he receive deliverance from another's hand—can he acknowledge another's benefits? We know that he cannot. The self-existent is necessarily self-sufficient; there is none who has first given to him. Scripture nowhere speaks of God trusting in anything save in his own almighty arm, or taking counsel with anything save with his own infinite wisdom. But while it speaks of Christ as God, it speaks of HIM as depending on another, and receiving help from another's hand. The words before us fully explain the paradox. For they tell us that he took to himself a created and mortal nature, even the flesh and blood of the children. He who was rich thus partook of their poverty,¹ descending into their condition. The creature's poverty is its essential weakness and feebleness; it needs everything; it has nothing but what it every moment receives. And into THIS CONDITION the Son of God descended, proving on the one hand, as his people's example, their estate and circumstances, and glorifying the Father on the other, by continual dependance on his grace. This is the wondrous mystery of Incarnation; unsearchable indeed, but full of comfort. We learn from it that our God can be our brother; that our Almighty Creator can know by personal experience the weaknesses, infirmities and trials of his miserable and dying creatures! And Reason is baffled, while faith humbly adores.

St. Paul goes on to say,—

That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil.

He assigns in these words another reason why the Son of God assumed the children's flesh and blood. It was that he might destroy Satan as the prince of death, i. e. take from Satan his power to kill them. And because this could be accomplished only through his own death, he took a nature which was capable of dying. Three considerations here

¹ II Corinthians viii. 9.

present themselves to the mind. We inquire, in the first place, how Satan has power to kill us, and what is the death which he inflicts. We inquire, in the second place, how Jesus by dying has destroyed that deadly power. And we inquire, in the third place, who the children are for whose eternal salvation from it he was pleased to become incarnate. We shall take these questions in order.

1st. Our blessed Lord has told us that Satan is "a murderer from the beginning." The destruction of the body is what we call murder, for man can do no more. And the dissolution of the body is what we call death, for all else is hidden from our view. But real death and real murder is the destruction of both soul and body in hell. Over both these forms of death, Satan the murderer has power. He introduced the former; he will accomplish the latter. He had no such power over man originally. But he prevailed with man to be his accomplice in transgression, and now he is the executioner of the vengeance denounced against it. It were easy indeed for the Omnipotent to snatch us from his hand. But God cannot dishonour his justice and his truth. And so long therefore as he who is emphatically styled "the accuser," can substantiate any plea against us at the bar of God, he has a right to demand his victims. I gather this from what is declared in Scripture concerning Satan's accusations of the just. We are told in the Apocalypse, that he accuses them before God night and day.¹ And God himself declares that he moved him against holy Job, to destroy him without cause.² Now these accusations must be fairly met, and the enemy who prefers them must be silenced. And this brings us to the next consideration.

2nd. The Son of God, assuming our mortal nature, came into the world to save us, and Satan fixed on him immediately his murderous eye. It was at his instigation that the Jews sought to shed his blood; Jesus told them, "ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." And he was permitted to do according to the lust of

¹ Rev. xii. 10.

² Job ii. 3.

³ John viii. 44.

his heart, for by their hands he killed the Prince of life. But here that wicked one fell into the ditch which he had made; the death of Jesus proved the destruction of his power. For that death, though Satan knew it not, was the atonement for man's transgression, and the expiation of his iniquity; and by it moreover, everlasting righteousness was brought in. Jesus therefore, when he rose from the dead, became an everlasting sanctuary from Satan's power to all who should fly to him for refuge. In his death the denunciations of the broken law have been accomplished, and its precepts have been all fulfilled. And those who trust in him have a claim, not on the mercy only, but on the justice and truth of God. They have a claim on his justice, for they present the atonement of his Son; they have a claim on his truth, for he has bidden them trust in that atonement, and sworn that they shall not be ashamed. God cannot disallow these claims, and the accuser has nothing to answer. He retires from the judgment-seat without a plea against Christ's people; his power to kill is taken from him, and his prey escapes his unwilling grasp. "They overcome him," as we read in the Apocalypse, "by the blood of the Lamb."¹ Though the death of the body remains, that blood has plucked out its sting. And as for the threatened death to come, it is changed by the power of that sacrifice into the glories of endless life.

3rd. Let us next inquire who those children are for whose salvation from the enemy's power Christ was pleased to become incarnate. They are those, as we have already seen, whom Christ has begotten to himself—his brethren, his saved Church. He calls them in the text, "the children which God hath given *me*." And he intimates by these words the humbling truth that to choose him as a Saviour and to come to him is no act of the freewill of man. For "he hath no form nor comeliness" in human eyes, "and when we shall see him," says the prophet, "there is no beauty that we should desire him."² All therefore who really come to Christ are the children whom God has given

¹ Rev. xii. 11.

² Isaiah liii. 2.

to him, for they have been drawn by the Father who sent him.¹ But the Father has promised to him such a seed. For "predestination to life," as our seventeenth article teaches, "is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed, by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour." Those thus predestinated to life are the children here spoken of. And being given by the Father to Christ, "they be called," as the article goes on to tell us, "according to God's purpose, by his Spirit working in due season; they through grace, obey the calling; they be justified freely; they be made sons of God by adoption; they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, attain to everlasting felicity." The reward of the Redeemer, and the final salvation of his people, are thus eternally secured. If that reward and that salvation stood on the slippery base of man's freewill, they would be more than uncertain. But they stand on the promise and determined counsel of God. The Father has said that Christ "shall see his seed," that "he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied;"² and the wickedness of hell and earth combined cannot cause the blessed word to fail. He to whom all his works are known from the beginning, had the salvation of this his predestinated family in his eye from everlasting. And to effect this salvation, was his ultimate purpose in sending his Son into the world. It was the ultimate purpose of Christ also in taking their flesh and blood. For they were before him from eternity, from righteous Abel to the last believer who shall be gathered in; and he delighted before the worlds were, in the prospect of their being with him for ever.³ In the fulness of time therefore he came and died, and his death has effected its blessed purpose. His children led by the Spirit to him as their Saviour, are placed, one by one, beyond the destroyer's

¹ John vi. 37, 44.² Isaiah liii. 10, 11.³ Prov. viii. 31.

reach. The power of the Prince of death is broken, so far as they are concerned. And it is of them only that St. Paul in the text is speaking.

I have said that the whole saved Church, from the time of Abel to the yet future revelation of the kingdom, were in the Redeemer's eye, when he vouchsafed to become incarnate. When he came into the world, some of these were sleeping in the dust. But he did not forget them because they were asleep. His work in flesh had reference to them, as truly as to those then alive upon the earth, and to all who to the end of time shall believe in his blessed name. St. Paul reminds us of this in the concluding words of the text—

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

It has been mentioned already that the persons here referred to are the Old Testament saints. They were "subject to bondage, through fear of death." The law under which they lived, was a yoke which neither their fathers nor they were able to bear.¹ It threatened them with death for the omission of the slightest ceremony, and they were kept in constant dread. We have an example of this in David. As the ark of God was in its progress to Jerusalem, "Uzza," the member of a family which had given it shelter for twenty years, "put forth his hand to hold it, for the oxen stumbled." But he was smitten on the instant, "there he died before God." And David, who witnessed this act of judgment, "was afraid of God that day." He said, "how shall the ark of God come home to me?" he carried it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite! Here was the "bondage through fear of death" of which the text makes mention. God's own anointed king sent his ark to the alien and the stranger. The unintentional omission of some ceremony might have brought destruction on himself and his house.²

And there was another way in which Old Testament saints were in bondage through fear of death. That awful event

¹ Acts xv. 10.

² I Chron. xiii.

is before us all. And a sense of guilt makes the prospect terrible; "the sting of death is sin."¹ Nothing but the assurance of forgiving mercy can possibly pluck out this sting. But the dispensation under which these saints lived, did not minister this assurance in its fulness. Its offerings brought sin to remembrance and kept alive a sense of guilt, and thus alarmed without pacifying the conscience. Doubtless they were shadows of a coming substance, even the Lamb which God should provide. But that substance was dimly revealed and imperfectly apprehended. And the prospect of death was not therefore to these saints one of unmingled peace; they rather dreaded the day when the disembodied spirit should be called to give in its account. As we have taken David for an example, let us also take Hezekiah. He had walked before God "in truth, and with a perfect heart;"² and yet when he was sick unto death, he expresses no filial confidence, but miserable bondage and fear. He speaks of God "as a lion," waiting "to break his bones," and of himself as mourning like a dove, and for peace having "great bitterness."³ Instead of "a desire to depart," and accounting it "far better," "Hezekiah wept sore."

If these were the feelings of men like Hezekiah and David, we may infer the spiritual condition of those of lower attainments. They served God indeed, but in bondage; they hoped in his mercy, but their hope was with fear and trembling. And even after they passed into the disembodied state, their felicity was not perfected; St. Paul says expressly in the text before us, that the Saviour became incarnate and died and rose again, "that he might deliver them." From what condition could they possibly need deliverance *then*? The question is momentous, and leads us into a subject confessedly deep and mysterious. But we are not without some light to guide us. St. Paul declares in another place, "that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing."⁴

¹ I Cor. xv. 56.² II Kings xx. 3.³ Isaiah xxxviii. 3, 13, 17.⁴ Hebrews ix. 8.

The way into the holiest of all, is access to God as a Father. He was not revealed in this gracious character, under the legal dispensation, but was known only as a Master and a Friend. The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus revealed his paternal grace; till "that miracle of time" was accomplished, its discoveries could not be antedated, either by saints in flesh or those disembodied and at rest. These last had their place of rest, and waited the completion of a yet unperfected felicity. Jesus, having died, descended into his people's grave. And we know that during the three days of his abode in it, he did not ascend to his Father. "It is to be believed," says the 8rd Article, "that he descended into hell." "His ghost," says an old Article, "was with the ghosts that were in hell, and did preach to the same, as the place of St. Peter doth testify."¹ These ghosts or spirits could be none other than those of Old Testament saints at rest in Hades. Why might not Jesus really preach to them? Why might he not be the Herald of his own accomplished work of righteousness, and of that paternal name of God which was about to be proclaimed to men? He carried many of his people with him, in their bodies, direct from the tomb to glory.* Why might he not translate the spirits of the remainder from a state of imperfect happiness to the perfected felicity of the presence of God? Let these things be, and the words of St. Paul, "the spirits of just men made perfect,"² are at once and most satisfactorily explained. And the same may be said of the words before us. Such an act would indeed be the delivering of those who had once been in bondage.

The Apostle tells us, in those words to which I have just referred, that we are come to the spirits of these just ones made perfect. For we have been privileged to hear those glad tidings of salvation accomplished, which fill their hearts with joy. And the same revelation of the blessed God which

¹ Art. Synod London: A.D. 1553.

² Hebrews xii. 23.

* Matthew xxvii. 52, 53. It cannot for an instant be supposed that the saints here spoken of returned again to the tomb. They must have joined their Lord after his ascension into heaven.

delivered these Old Testament saints, once through fear of death subject to bondage, plucks out the sting of death ere it comes to believers now. He who trusts in Christ, and is assured, trusting in him, of remission of sin and eternal acceptance with God, cannot be afraid to die. Death comes, not as a lion, to break his bones, but as a friend, to take down his earthly tabernacle, that the spirit may flit to the bosom of a reconciled Father and an elder Brother above. Believing in what Christ has done, he says with aged Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,...for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."¹ And filled with love to the Author of this salvation he longs to behold his glory, saying with the blessed Apostle whose words we are now considering, "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better."² Oh may God grant to us such precious faith and love!

This subject teaches us most emphatically the depravity of human nature. Why did God call the patriarch Abraham to leave his kindred, and father's house? Because the whole earth had relapsed into idolatry, and he sought a holy family that he might preserve in an apostate world the knowledge of his name. He had tried man with mercy, in the promise of salvation given to Adam; with judgment, in the dreadful flood; with mercy again, in Noah's gracious covenant; but all had been in vain, the whole earth was fast forgetting him. And the case was the same with favoured Israel. They were preserved from becoming a nation of idolaters, only, as we learn from God's own mouth, because HE RESERVED TO HIMSELF seven thousand men which had not bowed the knee to Baal. And EVEN SO, AT THIS PRESENT TIME," says St. Paul, "there is a remnant according to the election of grace."³ God has a faithful people on the earth now, only because the Father has promised that Christ "shall see his seed." All that God has done in Christ for the world, fails and has ever failed to elicit from man any response of grateful obedience. These precious words therefore, "behold I and the children which God hath given me," are the con-

¹ Luke ii. 29, 30.² Phil. i. 23.³ Romans xi. 1—5.

solation of the private Christian who has experience in his own heart of the common sin of his race. They are the consolation also of the faithful minister who has experience of the hearts of others, by assuring him from God, that he shall not labour in vain. But I must again repeat that they contain the most emphatic proof which is to be met with in the book of God, of the depravity of man—depravity incurable, save by the power of the Omnipotent.

This subject teaches us another lesson. We have seen how in reference to God's believing people, the power of Satan is destroyed. Let us learn then who they are over whom Satan retains his power, and how it is that he retains it. He retains it over all who are not found in Christ; he accuses them, and his accusations prevail; they are delivered to the tormentor. God saves his family not merely by having sent his Son to die for them, but by bringing them to him as their everlasting sanctuary from the power of that terrible one. Christ died for us, but that alone will not ensure our safety; we must be found in him. So long as unconvinced of our ruined and undone condition, we rest on something else save on his blood and righteousness, we are exposed to the malice of Satan, and his accusations will prevail against us at the judgment-bar of God. But if we are brought by the Spirit's gracious teaching, to rest on him alone, we shall be delivered from bondage now, and be enabled without fear to look to death, judgment and eternity. And when these awful realities come upon us, as one day they surely will, we shall find the Saviour in whom we have trusted, to be a sure hiding-place from trouble. Which may God grant to us of his infinite mercy!

LECTURE XIII.

Hebrews ii. 16—18.

"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

THE Apostle enlarges on the reason why the Saviour assumed humanity, and on the necessary results of such assumption. He came to extend help not to the fallen angels but to the ruined seed of Abraham. And having assumed their nature with this merciful and gracious design, it was needful for effecting it, that he should in all things be made like unto his brethren. He could not have been a merciful and faithful high-priest; he could not have been a succourer of the tempted, without having proved himself to the very uttermost the infirmities, sorrows and temptations of his people.

Here is at once perfect argument and infinite fulness of consolation.

For verily he EXTENDETH NO HELP TO angels, but to the seed of Abraham he EXTENDETH HELP.

We have just been told that the Saviour took the children's flesh and blood, that he might save them and destroy the Devil. For verily, says St. Paul, dwelling on the sentiment,

his manifestation had no aspect of mercy towards the fallen angels; its aspect of mercy was to the seed of Abraham. And what then could be more fitting, what more necessary, than that when he came into the world, he should come as a son of Abraham? But Christ, it may be said, did not come to save the Jews only. It is true; but still the Jew is the first in the covenant and purpose of God. And St. Paul writing to Hebrews, gives to their nation the pre-eminence which of right belongs to it. But this pre-eminence of the Jew does not exclude the Gentile; God has made of one blood all nations of men. When his Son therefore took flesh of Abraham, he took the flesh of all men. And he wears that common flesh eternally, Saviour alike of Jew and Gentile.

The sentiment then of the verse before us, is that the Son of God assumed humanity, because he came not to save the angels but to save us the sons of men. Angels sinned against God, and he cast them down to hell, reserving them in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day. Man sinned against him, and he visited man in mercy, sending his dear Son to bear the punishment of his transgressions. Let us not seek to find reasons for this difference: let us not say that the Devil's sin was of himself, while ours was of him. Scripture gives no sanction to such extenuation of human guilt. The only reason which it assigns is, "even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." And let us, accepting this as the only reason, be humbled before God, and adore his sovereign mercy.

But if the Son of God required to assume humanity that he might redeem mankind, we should have expected him to have assumed it, the Hebrews might have answered, clothed with the glory and dignity with which it was invested in the person of the first Adam.

"With him his noblest sons might not compare
In godlike feature and majestic air."

And such, human wisdom says, should have been the form and fashion on earth of the man who was the Son of God.

But a Saviour so conditioned would not have suited our ruined circumstances. Coming to save the lost, he came of fallen Abraham, not of unfallen Adam. He came, in other words, under the fall, and subject to the fall's disadvantages. For we read,—

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Let us observe the word "wherefore." Having come to extend help to the seed of Abraham, it behoved him on this account, to be in all things made like unto his brethren. From these "all things," sin is of course excepted, for he came to save from sin. But it is the only exception. He was made like to them in all other things—in their condition of weakness, in their circumstances of necessity, in their sorrows and trials, in everything in short which is incident to their mortal nature. And he was made thus like to them, as we learn from the apostolic statement before us, that he might effect the purposes of that mercy which had sent him from heaven, "that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest."

We are taught mercy to others by having been ourselves distressed. "Ye know the heart of a stranger," was God's word to Israel, "for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."¹ And this blessed lesson is engraven yet more deeply on our hearts, if in the hour of extremity, the mercy of another has been our only stay. For we remember this when our mercy is appealed to, and we cannot turn the suppliant away. And therefore it is, that when his people pour out their complaints to Jesus, they are assured of an attentive ear. I was once distressed like you, he says, and my only stay was the mercy of another. But what! Was Christ distressed like us? Was Christ's only stay the mercy of another? It was indeed so. Let us listen; "my God, my

¹ Exodus xxiii. 9.

God, why hast thou forsaken me, why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" And again, "be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help." And again, "but be not thou far from me, oh Lord: oh my strength, haste thee to help me: deliver my soul from the sword; save me from the lion's mouth."¹ Was any human sorrow ever like unto this sorrow? No; here indeed was unexampled distress, and the only stay of the distressed one was his eternal Father's mercy. It pleased the Father thus to bruise him, that when we in our distress, should appeal to his mercy, we might not appeal in vain. And, blessed be God, we do not appeal in vain. The man of sorrows remembers his own griefs, and compassionates the sorrowful.

St. Paul conjoins "faithful" with "merciful;" for to faithfulness the same principle applies. If in the hour of extremity, we have trusted in another's plighted word, and have experienced the blessedness of not being deceived in our trust, we cannot resist the appeal of those who have trusted in our veracity. Now the stay of Jesus, was not the mercy only, it was also the faithfulness of God. "Oh my God, I trust in thee, let me not be ashamed,"² was his continual appeal. It was his appeal amid the trials which beset him during his earthly pilgrimage: it was his appeal when descending into the darkness of the grave. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," he said, "neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption; thou wilt shew me the path of life."³ He was not made ashamed of this confidence: every jet and tittle of the Father's promises were accomplished in the Father's faithfulness. And it behoved him, as the text declares, to pass through this experience, that when we in our distress, should depend on his faithfulness, we might not depend in vain. He has promised to be with us in every trouble and extremity. He has said that when we pass through the fire, we shall not be burnt; that when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil. He has said that he will keep our dust while we sleep

¹ Psalm xxii. 1, 11, 19—21.² Psalm xxv. 2.³ Psalm xvi. 10, 11.

in the tomb, and raise us up again at the last day. We trust in his plighted word for the performance of these gracious promises. And they shall be performed. Jesus still remembers his time of need when he depended on another's faithfulness; and he will not shake us off from him, when in our helplessness we now depend on his.

This mercy and faithfulness of Christ, is the mercy and faithfulness of a High-Priest, of one charged with "things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." The priests under the law were charged with the sin-offerings, the peace-offerings and the thank-offerings of Israel. And on the due fulfilment of these duties of their holy function, Israel's reconciliation with God continually depended. Christ in like manner, is charged with his people's confessions of sin, with their complaints of weakness, and with their prayers, whether for pardoning mercy, or for the help which they need from above. And his discharge of this blessed function on their behalf, is a continual reconciliation for their sins. Reconciliation under the law, was not effected simply by the victim being slain; the High-Priest carried its blood within the veil, and sprinkled it before the mercy-seat. And so does Jesus, his great antitype. In presenting his people's confessions, prayers and complaints to the Father, he presents along with them the blood of his sacrifice; and the Father, looking to that blood, accepts these confessions, listens to these complaints, and hears these prayers. For "the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel,"¹ pleads for the petitioner, and never pleads in vain. And in the discharge of this office of love, our High-Priest's mercy and faithfulness at once appear. He does not reject our complaints and petitions; he graciously carries them in before his Father's majesty, and brings back to us an answer of peace. And when we have committed our requests to him, we need not fear; he never forgets any; he sends not the meanest petitioner unrelieved away. We read of the Chief Butler, that when exalted from the prison to the right hand of Pharaoh, he

¹ Hebrews xii. 24.

did not "remember Joseph, but forgot him."¹ But it is far otherwise with our faithful High-Priest above; his exaltation from the grave to the right hand of the Father's majesty, does not make him unmindful of his poor people on the earth. He remembers that he was once in their circumstances, and lives to be their friend and advocate.

Let us behold then this merciful and faithful High-Priest, let us look to Him and be saved! And ye that seek the Lord, it may be in heaviness and sorrow, hope in this High-Priest's mercy, stay yourselves on his faithfulness, and be of good cheer in him. No prayer for mercy, no complaint of weakness, can possibly remain unlistened to, or unanswered, as long as he lives at the right hand of God,—

For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

The conjunction "for," with which this verse commences, indicates at once that it is designed in further explanation of that which we have just been considering. And so the statement, that Christ was in all things made like unto his brethren, means that he himself hath suffered, being tempted. And the statement, that he is qualified by this experience as a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, means that he is able on this account to succour them that are tempted. St. Paul's interpretation of his own words exactly agrees with the exposition of them which has just been given.

Let us now consider this interpretation with the attention which it deserves. Christ is here said to have been tempted or tried; and his people are called the tempted or tried ones. There are several kinds of temptations or trials. Some come direct from God. He commands us to do what is grievous to flesh and blood, and it is a sore trial to obey. Or his providences toward us are of a dark and mysterious character, and it is a sore trial to yield un murmuring

¹ Genesis xl. 23.

submission. Other trials come from God indirectly. We experience the violent opposition of Satan and a wicked world in doing the Divine will, and we are disheartened and tempted to turn back. And there are temptations of another kind, which come direct from Satan. He addresses us through the weakness of our nature, and through the seductions of a wicked world, tempting us to sin. Or he vexes and harasses the mind with hard thoughts of God, tempting us to despair of his mercy, and to blaspheme him in our hearts. And God's people are well called, in the text, the tempted ones; they have had, in every age, and have still experience of all these temptations. Had not Abraham our father such experience when he was commanded to take his son, his only son Isaac, and offer him for a burnt-offering?¹ And had not Jacob such experience when Joseph was torn from him, and Simeon detained and Benjamin demanded; and when under the cloud of these dark and mysterious providences the patriarch exclaimed, "all these things are against me?"² And had not the apostles of our Lord such experience when, in doing their Master's will, they encountered the fury of Satan and the rage of a wicked world, being always, as St. Paul tells us, "delivered unto death for Jesus' sake."³ Again, was not righteous Joseph, in the house of Potiphar, tempted of Satan, through his master's wife?⁴ And was not holy Job vexed and harassed by him, and tempted, through his wife, to "curse God and die?"⁵ And these cases are but a sample of many; temptation or trial in some form is universal with the people of God. And they suffer when thus tempted; for temptation and suffering are inseparable. I need not dwell on the sufferings of Abraham when he took the knife to slay his son; or on those of Jacob as he mourned for his beloved Joseph. The apostles tell us what they suffered. They speak of being troubled, perplexed, and cast down, adding only that they were "not in despair."⁶ And Satan's temptations are peculiarly afflicting. For it is impossible to come in contact

¹ Genesis xxii. 1, 2.² Genesis xlii. 36.³ II Cor. iv. 11.⁴ Genesis xxxix. 7—12.⁵ Job ii. 9.⁶ II Cor. iv. 7—9.

with the foul spirit of evil, and to be enticed by him to that which the soul abhors, without the acutest suffering. Blessed be God, then, who has provided for his tried and suffering people help and succour in their hour of need!

Where is this help and succour to be found? It is to be found in Christ, who, that he might be able to render it, "himself," says the text, "suffered, being tempted." For, as we have already seen, the Saviour, in his adorable condescension, passed through his people's trials. I need not remind you of his life of homeless poverty, of his betrayal, of his ignominy and stripes, of his bitter cross, of his cold and silent grave. These things were the Father's will. And Jesus, when thus tried, was found obedient. Forgetting his own ease and comfort, he gave himself a willing sacrifice. And was this trial without suffering? No; Jesus was a man. And though humanity may endure such things, it must suffer in enduring them. And he had other trials. He daily encountered the utmost rage of Satan, and the violence of the ungodly, in doing his Father's will. Let himself tell us whether he felt these things. "My soul is among lions, and I lie among them are set on fire, the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword."¹ And again, "oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!"² But the suffering which was thus occasioned to him, was little in comparison with what awaited him at the end of his course. For when he hung on the Cross, even the Father appeared his enemy. We speak of dark and mysterious providences: let us be silent and contemplate the amazing scene on Calvary. Jesus, in the hour of his utmost need, was utterly forsaken; forsaken by him to whose glory he had always devoted himself. And his faith must have been tried to the uttermost by this desertion, for regardless of the presence of his enemies, he implored a reason for it, saying, "why hast thou forsaken me?" But his faith, though tried, was "found unto praise and honour;"³ for even while this dark cloud hung over him, "MY GOD, MY GOD," was the thrilling

¹ Psalm lvi. 4.² Psalm lv. 6.³ 1 Peter i. 7.

language of his appeal. He was thus victorious, when tempted. But it were to make his Cross a mockery to say that he did not suffer.

And these were only a part of our blessed Saviour's trials. That he might, in all things, be made like unto us, he was tempted of Satan also. That foul and wicked spirit sought, throughout all his course, to deter him by threatenings, or to allure him by promises, from doing his Father's will. And when he saw that he prevailed not, he came upon him at the last, with all the powers of darkness, to vex and afflict his parting hours. This is a sacred subject: to treat of it is to lay bare the Redeemer's heart. God forbid then, that in meditating on it we should follow our own imaginations, or go one hair's-breadth beyond what is written in the infallible word of truth.

But it is written in that infallible word that Jesus was "tempted of the Devil;"¹ and St. Paul declares in the text that he suffered when thus tempted. Let it not seem strange to us that the Holy One of God was tempted. Temptation is not sin in the heart; it is sin presented to the mind. And if we do not consent to it, we are sinless in temptation. Both the first and second Adam were tempted, and both were without sin when the temptation was presented. The first Adam consented to the temptation, and admitting the sin into his heart, became a sinner. The second Adam consented not, and refusing the sin presented to him, remained for ever righteous. But it is a remark which ought never to be forgotten, that this "was owing to the strength of his virtue and holiness, and not to the weakness of the temptation."² The temptation was an awful reality. But it met a still deeper reality in the perfect holiness of the tempted One. It seems strange to many that Christ should have suffered, when thus tempted. For the evil thing, they say, had no power over his heart. But this was just the cause of his suffering. Let us take an illustration from human nature. Let us suppose that to a man of stainless honour some villain suggests a dishonest scheme, or that to a woman of spotless virtue he has the hardihood to make an unchaste

¹ Luke iv. 1, 2.

² Professor Stewart.

proposal. The blood rushing to the cheek tells at once the sense of injury, reveals at once the indignant feeling of outraged honour, of insulted virtue. And from such sense of injury suffering is inseparable: it consists in the recoil of the mind from the evil thing presented to it. Let us carry our illustration further. The tempter, let us suppose, has opportunity, not once nor twice, but many times, to press upon the tempted his infamous proposals, working alternately on their hopes and fears. They continue to resist his importunity, but the suffering of being exposed to it is only more acutely felt. And, to carry our illustration to the end, the tempter has his victims in his power, and is enabled to take advantage of their hours of weakness, and of their seasons of privation, when neither mind nor body is able to bear up. He takes this advantage, vexing them with continual solicitations, and their abhorrence of what he offers increases every moment. Let us present this picture to the mind. It is as finished a picture of suffering as the imagination can conceive. But it was with Jesus a sad reality. We talk of our honour, of our virtue, and can tell how it suffers by coming in contact with evil. What then must Jesus have felt when he came in contact with it! His bosom never harboured a thought save love, loyalty and entire devotion to his Father. And yet Satan was permitted to propose to him to disobey, dishonour and forsake the object of his eternal affections. His holy soul recoiled from the abominable thing presented to it; *but none of us may conceive the pain of that recoil.* And Satan had opportunity to bring sin before him, not once nor twice, but many times. We read that even after he had invited the Saviour to fall down and worship him, "he departed from him" only "for a season," soon returning on the same accursed errand.¹ And Jesus continuing to abhor the wickedness of the wicked one, continued to suffer from exposure to his hated presence. Satan was able also to *time* his temptations. He came upon the Saviour in his hours of weakness, when his body was spent with hunger in the wilderness, and his spirit was fainting in Gethsemane. On this last occasion he plied his infernal

¹ Luke iv. 13.

counsel till he threw our Lord into such an agony, that it wrung from him a sweat of blood. Let us consider these things with the reverential attention which they deserve, and it will not seem strange to us that the holy One of God could suffer through temptation. His immaculate purity abhorred the contact of sin.

Scripture also tells us, that when the Prince of this world prevailed not to seduce our Saviour, he came upon him to afflict and vex him. For Jesus himself calls his last hour, "the power of darkness."¹ And oh, who can tell what that power of darkness was! Who can tell the advantage which Satan took of the Father's desertion, to pour in upon the soul of his dying child a flood of distracted and despairing thoughts! But, blessed be God, his malice proved as ineffectual as his seduction had been. Jesus, afflicted but believing, rose above the dark temptations which surrounded him, and expired in calm peacefulness, commending his spirit into his Father's hands.

It is this experience of Christ, as the text declares, which qualifies him to succour the tempted ones. We should have said that the ability of the Son of God, combined with his heart of eternal love, was qualification sufficient. Such however, is not the mind of St. Paul. The Father and the Holy Ghost are equally almighty, and equally loving with the Son: but they are never spoken of as the refuge of the tempted in the way in which the Son is spoken of. For they never passed through human circumstances, nor experienced human trials; whereas the Son for this very end became incarnate, and dwelt as a man among men. There is a remarkable testimony to this Divine mystery of our faith in the famous "Ode to Adversity." The writer says,—

"When first thy Sire to send on earth
Virtue his darling child designed,
To thee he gave the heavenly birth,
And bade thee form the infant mind.

"Stern, rugged nurse! thy rigid lore
With patience many a year she bore;
What sorrow was thou bad'st her know,
And from her own she learned to melt at others' woe."

¹ Luke xxii. 53.

These two last lines contain, though the writer knew it not, the great principle of incarnation. Jesus, God's darling child, who was virtue and goodness personified, learned in the school of sorrow, to melt at his people's woes.

And who are these tempted ones whom Jesus is thus able to succour? They are those of whom I have been speaking in the two last lectures,—his brethren, his children whom God hath given to him. They are partakers of one nature with him, for they are begotten in his own image. They love the same Father and make it the business of their lives to serve him; they hate the same enemy and choose none of his ways. Jesus looks down on them, with a brother's eye, as they struggle on through their earthly pilgrimage. He sees them desiring and striving to obey, when the will of God is grievous to flesh and blood. He sees them walking in darkness under the cloud of mysterious providences, but still seeking to walk with God. He sees them going heavily through the opposition of the world and the Devil, but still refusing to turn back. He sees them under temptation, labouring to keep themselves that the wicked one touch them not.¹ Finally, he sees them in all these troubles looking upwards, turning their eyes to him for counsel, for consolation, for aid. And he resists not that imploring look. With the speed of pitying love he hastens into the Father's presence, and presenting that blood which makes continual atonement for their sins, returns to minister the succour which they need. They cannot therefore be overborne by the enemy. As their day is, their strength shall always be. And in the end they shall be more than conquerors through him who loves them.

Let us see then, that we are among this blessed people. And oh, let us beware how we speak of Christ's sympathy and love while we are servants of the Devil and of sin. When we embrace at once, and from the heart, the evil thing which that enemy presents, there is no suffering in temptation; he who "suffered, being tempted," has no fellow-feeling with us; and all the love which he has shewn,

¹ I John v. 18.

shall not hinder him from rejecting us at last. But if we are made the servants of his Father, and our feet are turned into his most holy ways, we shall experience the comfort of his love and the deep reality of his sympathy. And as we experience them, we will give glory to God who has provided a Saviour so entirely suited to our need.

We have now finished the first part of this epistle. It contains the greatest height, and also the greatest depth. It has exhibited Christ to us as the mighty God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Maker of angels, the Lord of the world to come. It has also exhibited him as the lowly Son of man, afflicted by Satan and a wicked world, vexed with trials of every form and name, and trusting in God in his extremity. It has spoken too of his atonement, telling us that to purge our sins he laid down his precious life. It thus presents to us Almighty power and mercy combined with human sympathy and love. This then is the Saviour, whom the gospel proclaims. Let us betake ourselves to his mercy, put our trust in his power to save, stay ourselves on his sympathy, and comfort our hearts in his love. Let us believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, and believing, we shall have life through his name. Which may God grant to us of his infinite mercy!

PART II.

SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO MOSES.

LECTURE I.

Hebrews iii. 1—6.

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him; as also MOSES was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than MOSES, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And MOSES verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but CHRIST as a Son over his own house.”

THE Apostle in these verses enters on the second part of the great subject before him. He has already demonstrated the superiority of Christ to prophets, and to angels. But MOSES had been more than a mere prophet, and in official dignity might be preferred even to angels. He had been the mediator between God and Israel. The Hebrews had received from his hand their statutes, ordinances and laws; and owed their very existence, as a nation, to his

prevalent intercession. They therefore gloried in his sainted memory. And it was needful to prove to them the infinite superiority of Messiah.

Much wisdom is displayed by St. Paul in the way in which he introduces and handles this delicate subject. It is introduced naturally and almost insensibly as a deduction from the preceding argument. He has just been setting forth the dignity of Christ as the apostle, or divinely commissioned messenger of the Father, and the High-Priest of his Church. From this he is most naturally led to exhort the Hebrews to "consider" him in these sacred characters. And they could hardly do this without Moses and Aaron being presented to their minds. For these distinguished servants of God may be said to have shared this twofold dignity between them. Moses was eminently God's apostle, for he was sent by him on the highest and holiest errand ever entrusted to man. And Aaron was at once high-priest in his own person, and the father of Israel's priesthood. Having spoken then of Christ as Apostle and High-Priest, St. Paul is led to compare him in this exalted character, with those who had borne the same dignities. The comparison with Aaron is taken up afterwards: the comparison with Moses is handled in the words of the text. The Hebrews gloried in the faithfulness of Moses, which had been acknowledged by God himself. St. Paul therefore begins by declaring that Christ was equally faithful. And he then goes on to shew that because of the Divinity of his person, he is worthy of much more glory. He reminds them that the builder of a house is better than the house which he builds; and that the son in the family is better than the servant. And as they had learned from the preceding argument that Christ was the builder of the Church, and the Father's Son from everlasting, the application was obvious and irresistible. He was necessarily as much better than Moses as a man is better than the stones with which he builds; or, as the son in his own house and the house of his father, is better than the hired servant. Such is the argument of the text in general; let us now consider it in detail.

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

St. Paul here calls the Hebrews "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." The holy are those who are sanctified or separated to the service of God. To partake of the heavenly calling is to be led, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, to believe in Jesus as the Christ. And St. Paul conjoins these two things, because they are inseparable. There is no holiness save through the knowledge and faith of Christ. And such knowledge and faith infallibly lead to holiness; "sanctify them through thy truth,"¹ was the prayer of our Lord for his disciples. Now St. Paul trusted that this was the case with those to whom he was writing. They had separated themselves from the mass of their unbelieving countrymen, professing to receive that Saviour whom they had rejected, and had enrolled themselves by baptism in the number of his people. And therefore he considered them, in the judgment of charity, as holy and called of God. I say, in the judgment of charity, for we must not suppose that the Apostle had an infallible assurance of their being so. The way in which he addresses them throughout this epistle, proves that he had not. He warns them, in this very chapter, to take heed lest like their fathers, they came short of the rest of God. And further on in the epistle he speaks in the most awful terms of the consequences of apostacy, reminding them that the ground which bears briers and thorns, is given over to be burned; that vengeance and fiery indignation shall devour the adversaries; and that those who like Esau, sell their birthright, shall like him, find no place of repentance. But the apostles never attempted to read the hearts of men. They received them on their profession, except their practice contradicted it. And while they did so, they addressed to them exhortations and admonitions which discovered their sincerity or hypocrisy. Of this we have an example in the

¹ John xvii. 17.

words before us. St. Paul exhorts those whom he has just addressed as holy and called of God, to consider the Apostle and High-Priest of their profession, i.e. to consider him in whom they professed to believe as the Apostle of the Father and the High-Priest of the Church. Their unbelieving countrymen had regarded him as a deceiver while he lived, considered his death to have been that of a malefactor, and pretended that his disciples had stolen his dead body from the sepulchre. They, on the other hand, acknowledged him to have been, in his life and ministry, the faithful messenger of the Father's truth, acknowledged his death as the great atonement for sin, and made open confession of their faith in his glorious resurrection from the dead, as the anointed Saviour of mankind. But St. Paul reminds them that this was not enough, that it was needful also to consider him. And this exhortation implied a great deal. It implied consideration of their spiritual necessities, their blindness and need of instruction, their guilt and need of pardoning mercy, their weakness and need of succour from on high. It implied also consideration of his ability to help them; his ability, as Apostle, to instruct them; his ability, as High-Priest, to make reconciliation for their sins, and to minister to them continually the aids of heavenly grace. It was in short, a consideration which would lead them to Christ, as ignorant and guilty sinners, to receive these mercies from his hand. For this is the end of all teaching on the one hand, and of all knowledge on the other. "These things are written," says St. John, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name."¹ In exhorting therefore to such consideration, St. Paul applied a touchstone to the spiritual state of the Hebrews. For none save those who have been taught of the Holy Ghost and have been made, by his grace, the true-hearted servants of God, will ever be persuaded to consider the Lord Jesus. The carnal eye sees no beauty in him, the carnal mind sees no reason why it should desire him. And thus the appellation and admonition

¹ John xx. 31.

contained in the words before us, are beautifully apposite to each other: compliance with the latter declaring who those were to whom the former by right belonged.

We are not Hebrews, but St. Paul addresses us in these words; he speaks to us as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." We all profess to be the servants of God, we all profess to have been taught by the Spirit to know and believe in Christ. We were enrolled by baptism in the number of his people; and our observance ever since of the ordinances of the Church, and attendance on her holy worship, have been, and are a continued declaration on our part of adherence to that Saviour in whose name we were baptized. If we do not intend them as such, we are guilty of trifling with the Lord; and the very confessions and prayers which we continually present in the sanctuary, shall rise up in judgment against us. If on the other hand, this profession is sincere, we shall welcome the exhortation of the text, we shall "consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." We shall consider his name, we shall consider his offices of love. His name is Jesus, or Jah Hoshua, i. e. God the Saviour. His name is also Christ, i. e. the anointed One. For he was anointed to the offices which he fills, anointed as the Father's Apostle, anointed as his people's High-Priest. We learned these things from the preceding part of the epistle. We learned to know him as God, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, the layer of the foundations of the earth, the upholder of all things by the word of his power. We learned to know him also as God the Saviour, who took part of the flesh and blood of the children, who was made perfect through sufferings, who having by himself purged our sins, sat down for us on the right hand of the heavenly Majesty. We learned to know him as the Father's Apostle, by whom he who in past ages spake by prophets, is now speaking to mankind. We learned to know him as his people's High-Priest, who in the fulness of his mercy makes reconciliation for their sins, and faithfully ministers help and succour in their every time of need. And finally, we learned

to know him as the Christ, by the heavenly anointing which descended on him as he came out of the waters of Jordan, and by the signs and wonders and divers miracles which, in the power of that anointing, were wrought by his hands.

Now these things afford abundant matter for the most solemn and profitable consideration. It is not the manner of the Lord to make a needless display of love and mercy. We must have been lost indeed to have made it needful that for our salvation the Son of his love should bleed and die! We must have been prodigals indeed to have made it needful that such a Messenger should leave his native skies to speak to us in God's name, and bring us back! We must be ignorant, blind and helpless indeed, unable to find the heavenly road, and equally unable to walk in it, to make us need the compassionate succour and gracious guidance of such a High-Priest by the way! The provision which God has made for our spiritual destitution and necessities, declares the reality of that destitution and the extent of these necessities. Have we ever considered this? And have our eyes been opened to discern the suitableness and fulness of this Divine provision? "Unto you that believe," says St. Peter, "he is precious."¹ Is Christ precious to us? "The Lord hath anointed me," said that heavenly apostle, "to preach good tidings to the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted...to comfort all that mourn."² Are we among these broken-hearted mourners? Has a discovery of our sinful and lost estate quieted and subdued our spirits, and taught us to welcome the glad tidings of the mercy of our God? Has it taught us to know the value of that blood through which this mercy comes? And again, has experience of our blindness, weakness and helplessness taught us to prize the promised aids of heavenly grace, and to lift our eyes in every extremity to our glorious High-Priest above? Then are we indeed "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." And having been already rewarded by increased knowledge of the Saviour, for our past consideration of him, we shall be disposed to consider him still.

¹ 1 Peter ii. 7.

² Isaiah lxi. 1, 2.

But we proceed with the text, in which St. Paul furnishes additional materials for that consideration to which he exhorts us.

Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

In these words, as has been already stated, St. Paul begins to compare Christ, the great Apostle of our profession, with Moses, the apostle of the former dispensation. The Hebrews had reason to speak of the faithfulness of Moses, and St. Paul hastens to acknowledge it. God himself had done so in the very words which are here quoted. "My servant Moses," he said, "is faithful in all mine house."¹ But while I admit the faithfulness of Moses, says St. Paul, I cannot allow that in this respect he has any advantage over Christ. For Christ also was faithful to him that appointed him: he spake the Father's word faithfully, and did the Father's work. The Apostle might well say so. "I have glorified thee on the earth," was the solemn declaration of Jesus himself, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."² And the Father testified that he had done so, by raising him from the dead. The words however which we are now considering, contain something more than a mere averment of Christ's faithfulness: the dignity of his person also appears in them. For Moses is said to have been faithful "in HIS (i.e. in Christ's) house." This implies, what is afterwards more fully stated, that Christ is the Builder and Lord of the house in which Moses exercised his ministry. It also implies that the testimony to the faithfulness of Moses, to which we have already referred, was borne by Christ himself as Moses' Lord and Master. And this is obviously equivalent to a declaration of the Saviour's Divinity; for the speaker on that memorable occasion is declared to have been the living God. Finally, if we couple this testimony to the Divinity of Christ with the statement which we have just been considering, of his

¹ Numbers xii. 7.

² John xvii. 4.

having been appointed to his office by another, he comes before us at once in his sacred character of Mediator, Son of God and man, "equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead," but the Father's willing servant in the nature which he had assumed. St. Paul has already discoursed of him in this sacred character, and has preferred him to angels. And now, discoursing of him in the same character, he goes on to prefer him to Moses.

That the Hebrews might understand the reason of this preference, the Apostle states in express terms what his preceding language has implied.

For HE is counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God.

Moses was an apostle and mediator, immediately appointed by God. Christ was the same. And St. Paul means now to tell the Hebrews, This Apostle and Mediator is counted by him that appointed him, worthy of more glory than Moses. They had been instructed concerning this glory in the preceding part of the epistle. They had been told of Christ's exaltation to the right hand of the heavenly majesty, and of his receiving there the honour and worship of the Father. And they knew that such honour and dignity were never bestowed on Moses. St. Paul next states the reason of this difference. Christ is the builder of the Church, he says, and Moses was but a part of it. And surely "he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house!" But how do you prove, a Hebrew might have asked, that Christ is the builder of the Church. "Every house," answers St. Paul, "is builded by some man," for no house can build itself. The Church therefore did not build itself, but was built by God the maker of all things. And Christ is that God; in the beginning he laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work

of his hands.¹ Christ is therefore the builder of the Church; his hands laid its foundation and shall also bring forth its topstone.

This unanswerable argument is immediately followed up ;

And Moses verily was faithful in all his house AS A CONFIDENTIAL SERVANT, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. But Christ, as a Son, over his own house.

Here we have a high and noble testimony to Moses, introduced evidently for a double purpose. It soothed Hebrew feelings and disarmed Hebrew prejudices on the one hand ; it enhanced and still enhances the testimony borne to Christ on the other. Moses was a confidential servant. God trusted him, for he knew him worthy of trust ; and his habitual faithfulness in all things, justified the confidence reposed in him. Let us observe the word "verily." It is indeed so, says St. Paul ; let no man take from the illustrious Moses this well-earned glory. Can there then be a greater glory ? To this, the natural question of every Hebrew, the Apostle answers, the glory of Christ the Son. Moses after all, was but a servant, having charge in the house of another. But Christ is over the house, and the house is his own. For he is the Son, and "all things that the Father hath" are his.* God's people, we may observe, have just been called the house which Christ builds, and are now called the household over which he has authority. St. Peter in like manner, calls believers the temple of God, and the priesthood in the temple.³ Such mixed metaphors are continual in the sacred writers. They serve to set forth the fulness of Christ, and the varied relations in which he stands to his people. If they are the stones of a building, he is their Builder ; if they are a household, he is their Head. Christ is faithful as Head over this family of God. Entering into the Father's mind, and knowing the Father's counsels, he faithfully carries out that mind, and faithfully executes these counsels. He thus orders everything within the Church for.

¹ Hebrews i. 10.

² John xvi. 15.

³ I Peter ii. 5.

the Divine glory, and for the blessedness of his people. The faithfulness of Moses was that of a servant, "for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." He did not understand the reason of almost anything which was done by his direction; the time for explaining them was not then come; they "were to be spoken after." His duty was to testify truly what he heard from God's mouth, and to do exactly as God desired him; and of this duty he faithfully acquitted himself. But surely the glory which is due to him for having done so, is not for a moment to be compared with the glory due to Christ, the possessor of the Father's mind, the sharer in his secret counsels, the intelligent guide and orderer of the Church from the beginning!

Such is the substance of this important argument. And we may truly say of it, that if he granted its premises to be correct, viz. the Divinity of Christ's person, the most devoted adherent of Moses could not question its conclusion. But we must not look upon it as a mere argument. The considerations which it suggests are fitted, as we shall now see, to edify believers to the end of time.

I. What is here declared concerning Christ's faithfulness to him that appointed him, is very full of comfort. Our attention was already drawn to his faithfulness to us as our High-Priest; now we are told of his faithfulness to the Father as his Apostle. We are assured that he has delivered the Father's message faithfully, and truly expressed the Father's mind. "I have not spoken of myself," he says, "but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak;...whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."¹ How full of consolation is this faithfulness of Christ, his faithfulness in both his offices! If on the one hand, God's messenger could have dealt untruly, we might be believing a lie in believing the blessed gospel, and so at last come short of salvation. Or if on the other hand, our High-Priest could prove unmindful of us, we might lift our eyes to him, and yet be left to perish in

¹ John xii. 49, 50.

our need. But, blessed be God, the faithfulness of Christ to the Father and to us, makes both these things impossible. The Father shall avouch at last every word which the Son has spoken, to be his true message, the expression of his very mind. And all who have looked to Jesus, or called on his name, shall avouch that they have never on one occasion been sent unrelieved and unassisted away. The faithfulness of Christ is thus the security of our salvation. Because it cannot fail, "he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."¹

II. What is here declared concerning Christ's Divine Majesty, is fitted to teach us the deepest humility. There never was any servant of God so distinguished and honoured as Moses: God was wont to speak face to face with him, "as a man speaketh with his friend."² There is none of us who would not have felt awe-struck in his august and sainted presence. But what was this eminent prophet and confidential minister of God in comparison with Christ? As a stone is in comparison with the living and intelligent builder who holds it in his hand! If it is a polished stone, fitted to occupy a prominent place in the edifice, the builder has polished and prepared it. So it was with Moses; he owed all his excellence to his Saviour. If he was meek, holy, wise, Christ had made him so. If he was fitted for that distinguished place in the Church which it was God's will that he should occupy, Christ had fitted him. In himself he was no better than a stone, but he was in the hands of him of whom Scripture testifies "that he is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."³ If such was the case with the illustrious Moses, which of us shall boast of himself? We are, in comparison with Christ, as the clay in the hand of the potter. If there is any good thing in us, we owe it to his grace. If we have learned to "walk religiously in good works," it is because we "are his workmanship."⁴ The rough stones of the quarry may sooner prepare themselves to be built into the royal palace than we the fallen children of men make ourselves meet, as polished

¹ I Peter ii. 6. ² Exodus xxxiii. 11. ³ Matt. iii. 9. ⁴ Ephes. ii. 10.

stones, for God's spiritual and everlasting temple. Contemplating then the infinite distance between our vileness and the adorable majesty of the Saviour, let us lie submissive at his feet, imploring him of his sovereign mercy to create in us a clean heart, and to work in us continually all the good pleasure of his will.

III. What is here declared concerning Christ as faithful head over the house of his Father, ought to teach us unre-served obedience to his will, and unhesitating confidence in his grace. We ought to obey him, because He is our head, and because disobedience is contempt of "him that appointed him." And we are bound by the ties of gratitude to obey him, because He is our faithful head, faithful in ordering everything which befalls his believing people for the glory of the Father in them, and for their present and everlasting blessedness. For through his watchful providence it comes to pass "that all things work together for good to them that love God."¹ This may not appear so clear at present, but when we shall have arrived at God's heavenly kingdom, the light of eternity shall make it clear. And beholding in that glorious light the faithfulness of Christ to us, we shall be ashamed for ever of our miserable returns to him. If then we have tasted that He is gracious, let us manifest our gratitude to our faithful Lord by lives of devoted and unre-served obedience! We shall feel doubtless, if we know ourselves, that we are not able to serve Him, that we lack both strength and wisdom. But the wants of a household lie upon its head: it is his part to feed, clothe and provide for the members of his family. "If any provide not for his own," says St. Paul, "and specially for those of his own house,...he is worse than an infidel."² The head of the Church is no exception to this rule; his household has a claim upon him, and he acknowledges the claim. Let our wants then lie on Him. He will strengthen us with spiritual food, and clothe us with the garments of righteousness;³ He will be to us wisdom, sanctification and redemption.⁴ And because the disordered state of a household reflects upon its

¹ Rom. viii. 28.

² I Timothy v. 8.

³ Isaiah lxi. 10.

⁴ I Cor. i. 30.

head, He will teach us for the glory of his name "how to walk and to please God."¹ He also knows our necessities too well to be wearied by the importunity of incessant application. Let our prayer then be without ceasing: let the relation in which he stands to us inspire our hearts with confidence in his grace continually.

And now, if we are disposed to "consider" the Lord Jesus, we have been furnished with additional and abundant materials for thought. He has been presented to us as the Mighty God, the Builder of the Church; as the Father's faithful Apostle, as his people's faithful Head. By considering him in these sacred characters we shall be taught to know our nothingness, and learn to lift up our heads with joy, seeing our salvation as secured and all our wants provided for, through faith in him. May God therefore of his mercy grant us grace to do so. It will tend to our edification and establishment in the faith, if we have already known the Lord Jesus; it will be our salvation, if such knowledge is yet to be acquired.

¹ 1 Thessalonians iv. 1.

LECTURE II.

Hebrews iii. 6.

"Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

WE have just had Christ presented to us, as the Builder of God's house and the Head over God's family. St. Paul now goes on to shew the Hebrews that this house, this family, is the congregation of God's people, and that he and they therefore were a part of it, if they possessed the character of God's people, i. e. if they held "fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end."

The term house having been used in the context in these two senses, we may take them in order. I. The mark of Christ's family is the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope held firm to the end. II. This character belonging to us and abiding with us is the sign to ourselves and others that we are the building of the Lord.

I. A family comprehends both servants and children. And therefore the statement that we are Christ's family may mean that we are Christ's servants, or it may mean that we are his children. There cannot be a doubt that the latter is the meaning. Believers are indeed servants, but they serve as sons, for they "are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."¹ And Christ's headship over his house is not therefore the headship of a master over a household of servants, but of a Son over a family of sons. They are "his own" family, because he is their Father, having made them partakers of his own life by the communication of his blessed

¹ Galatians iii. 26.

spirit. And this life shews itself in them, as it always shewed itself in him, viz. in the spirit of adoption, in the confidence and rejoicing of the hope held firm to the end. This spirit of adoption is thus the mark of the family of God. We have already learned this. "I will put my trust in him," Christ says of the Father, "and again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me."¹

A point so important as this demands larger proof and fuller illustration: let us refer therefore to holy Scripture. By consulting its sacred pages we shall find that confidence in God and hope in his mercy, have been the leading characteristic of his people in every age, and is the distinguishing mark of the true Christian still. The saints who lived before Christ's coming, were under dispensations of comparative darkness, and yet even in them we find this confidence and hope. The eleventh chapter of this book contains a long roll of illustrious names, the names of those who before that coming had obtained God's good report. And St. Paul declares that they obtained it "by faith." Now faith is confidence in God. And wherever it exists, it gives birth to hope, which is assured expectation of his mercy. We learn this from the Scripture to which I have just referred, which defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." By this sacred principle then, the principle referred to in the text as marking the family of Christ, righteous Abel "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." For he offered it, confiding in that mercy which in the fulness of time should send the promised seed. By the same sacred principle, even the faith which believes that God "is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Enoch attained to please God, and to be translated without seeing death. Noah too, because he confided in God and looked for his promised mercy, "prepared," at his command, "an ark to the saving of his house," and condemned an unbelieving world. The same blessed confidence enabled Abraham to leave his country and his father's house;

¹ Hebrews ii. 13.

strengthened Sarah to conceive the child of promise; and made her and her aged partner the parents of a seed like "the stars of the sky in multitude," and "as the sand by the sea shore innumerable." It appeared more eminently still, when the same patriarch, at the Divine command, "took the knife to slay his son;" nothing doubting, while he did so, that the promises of God to that son should be accomplished, even though their accomplishment should require him to be raised from the dead. It appeared also in Isaac and Jacob, when they pronounced prophetic blessings over the heads of their children from their dying beds. For confidence in God and in his promises of mercy told them that these blessings should be fulfilled. And it appeared in Joseph, when he commanded that his bones should be carried into Canaan, assuring his brethren with his dying breath that God, according to his oath, would bestow that land upon their seed. It appeared in the parents of Moses, when relying on the protection of the God of Israel, and therefore fearless of the king's commandment, they hid their child. And it appeared in Moses himself, when from respect to the recompense of God's reward, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; when staying himself on the Invisible, he led Israel forth from Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; when by stretching forth his rod he turned the Red Sea into dry land, and made the waters a wall for the people, on their right hand and on their left. It appeared in Joshua and in Israel, when the walls of Jericho fell flat before them: it appeared even in Rahab the harlot, when she took part with God's people against her idolatrous country. It appeared in the far-famed worthies of Jewish history, during the period of Israel's glory, and also in the time of her decline. It nerved their arms for heroic action, and was the animating principle of their no less heroic sufferings. It smote down the Canaanite before Barak, the Midianite before Gideon, the Ammonite before Jephthah, the Philistine before Sampson: it put the enemies of David under the soles of his feet. It strengthened Elijah to confront the wicked Ahab, and to slay the priests of Baal. It

enabled Elisha to divide the Jordan, to smite the Syrians and to raise the dead. It charmed the consuming fire, stilled the lion's savage nature, and blunted the edge of the sword, that they should not harm God's people. Or if it was otherwise, the same principle gave them strength to endure. It taught them to welcome the murderous stones and the torturing saw, and made them gladly consent to wander as naked outcasts, and homeless exiles in the desert or by the mountain-side. Confidence in God, and unhesitating reliance on his mercy, was the secret animating principle of this holy obedience, this contempt of a present world, this indomitable courage, this irresistible strength, and when it was needed, this patient suffering. For it was the leading characteristic of those men of God, whose names have been handed down to us in this imperishable record of inspiration. And who was the spiritual father of this goodly family? Who inspired them with this noble principle of faith? Christ was their Father, and the life which he breathed into them was his own. For immediately after referring to them and their faith, St. Paul exhorts us, if we would possess the same, to look to Jesus, "the author and finisher of faith." Jesus therefore was the author of their faith. And faith is his own grace; besides being its author, he is also its finisher or perfecter. He carried faith to its perfection in his own most glorious course on earth, when, "for the joy that was set before him," as St. Paul adds immediately, he "endured the cross, despising the shame."¹ And the principle which strengthened him thus to endure, was the same which strengthened these his people. Partakers, through communication of his Spirit, of that confidence in God and hope in his mercy which was afterwards to distinguish their Saviour, they lived and laboured and suffered for his glory on the earth.

And if this feature distinguished the saints even of earlier dispensations, under which the Divine character and the Divine mercy were but darkly revealed, it marked still more distinctly the saints of apostolic times. Owing to the almost

¹ Hebrews xii. 2.

unceasing persecution to which God's people were then exposed, they were strongly tempted to forsake Christ, and to let slip their hope of salvation. St. Paul evidently refers to this in the words before us, when he warns the Hebrews that this hope must be held "firm to the end." And it was held firm; God made the malice of the enemy to defeat itself. The disastrous circumstances of the persecuted taught them to cling closer to their Saviour, and thus brought out into bolder and stronger relief this leading feature of the Christian character. In the saints of the Old Testament we meet with confidence in God and hope in his mercy; in those of the New, we meet with triumphant confidence and a rejoicing in hope. Nothing else could have enabled them to meet their circumstances. Hence the earnestness with which the apostles pressed upon the early churches this confidence and triumphant hope. "Now the God of hope," says St. Paul to the Romans, "fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."¹ And again—"rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer."² He also writes to the Philippians, "finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord: to write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."³ It was safe for them so to do, because joy in the Lord was the sacred principle which sustained them. How wonderfully the apostles were sustained! When St. Peter and St. John were beaten before the Sanhedrim for the testimony of Jesus, "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."⁴ When St. Paul and Silas were beaten at Philippi, and their feet were made fast in the stocks, the prisoners heard them at midnight, praying and singing praises to God.⁵ St. Paul's own troubles were more, we should say, than humanity could sustain. He was five times scourged, three times beaten with rods, once stoned and left for dead. He was three times shipwrecked. He was also in

¹ Romans xv. 13.² Romans xii. 12.³ Philippians iii. 1.⁴ Acts v. 41.⁵ Acts xvi. 25.

continual perils; perils among all sorts of persons, whether his own countrymen, the heathen, or false brethren; perils in all places, whether in the city, in the wilderness, or on the sea. And besides all this, he was exercised with continual weariness and painfulness, continual watching and fasting, and was exposed to hunger and thirst, to cold and nakedness.¹ But he was sustained through all these things, and he tells us expressly that the principle which sustained both him and his persecuted brethren, was their confidence and triumphant hope in Christ. "Being justified by faith," he says, "we have peace with God...and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And having stated this, he adds immediately, as the result of this faith and hope, "we glory in tribulations also."² And in another place, having referred in the most affecting language, to the tribulations of every kind to which he and his brethren were exposed, having spoken of them as "killed all the day long and accounted as sheep for the slaughter," he declares that assurance of their Redeemer's love, and triumphant persuasion, that neither death nor life, time nor eternity, should ever separate them from it, made them more than conquerors over all that the enemy could do. He speaks also of their being "saved," i. e. sustained "by hope."³ And finally, in writing to the Corinthians, he reminds them of this hope, of God's promise to raise them to life and glory with Christ their Lord; and adds immediately, "for which cause we faint not."⁴ St. Peter testifies to the same thing. He speaks of God's people as "in heaviness through manifold temptations," that their confidence in their Saviour might be proved; and of the faith which they were then exercising in him, as filling them "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."⁵ And we may add the testimony of St. John. He declares in his own name and in that of his believing brethren, that their faith in Jesus as the Son of God, was that which enabled them to overcome the world, which made them fearless of its frowns on the one hand, and raised them above its blandishments on the other. He

¹ II Cor. xi. 24-27.² Romans v. 1-3.³ Romans viii. 24, 35-39.⁴ II Cor. iv. 13, 14, 16.⁵ I Peter 1, 8.

adds that without this faith the world cannot be overcome, and then he defines it as the blessed confidence "that God hath given to us eternal life."¹ It were easy to multiply quotations. But it is not needful. Enough has been said to shew that the leading characteristic of the early Christians was triumphant confidence and joyful hope in Christ.

And Christianity has not changed its essential features since the days of these first disciples: the true Christian is still known by confidence in Christ and hope in his salvation. It cannot indeed be otherwise, for the way of salvation is the same from age to age. We are still saved by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, i. e. by confidence in him as our Saviour. And Christian hope is still, and must ever be inseparable from Christian faith. St. Peter therefore describes God's people as kept by his power, "through faith unto salvation," and as begotten "unto a living hope."² For this faith and hope are the badges which distinguish them. This living hope, as St. John defines it, is the hope of seeing Christ and of being like him hereafter. "And every man," he says, "that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."³ Here again we discern the Christian. He separates himself from the pollutions of a wicked world, and labours to be like his Lord in heart, behaviour and conversation. And this denying of himself to sin, and labouring after holiness, are the fruits of the blessed hope which he cherishes, of one day seeing and being like that Saviour, in whose mercy he is now confiding.

True Christians are indeed such a people; this character marks them both in life and death. They do not rely on their own wisdom, or seek to guide their own footsteps in their course through life. Desiring to walk to the praise and glory of God, they confide in Christ to guide them. For "the steps of a good man," Scripture tells us, "are ordered by the Lord," and therefore "he delighteth in his way."⁴ The Lord delighteth in it, because it is to his glory; the good man delighteth in it, because it is a way of

¹ I John v. 4, 5, 11. ² I Pet. 1, 3, 5. ³ I John iii. 2, 3. ⁴ Ps. xxxvii. 33.

peace. Does prosperity meet the Christian in this path? His heart is not carried away by it; his hope in Christ is better to him than all the world beside. Do adversity and sorrow meet him? Leaning on the arm of Christ his beloved,¹ he is prepared to encounter them; and because that arm sustains him, he is not overwhelmed. He knows also that God is faithful, who will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able to bear.² Is he, when God's time is come, called to pass through humanity's last hour of sorrow, the valley of the shadow of death? Even then he fears no evil, because the Saviour in whom he trusts, is with him.³ Confidence and hope abide when heart and flesh fail and strength sinks utterly; and even in the article of death the believer's spirit sings, "Christ is mine, he cannot fail me." Thus Jesus lived and died, and in this life of holiness and death of peace, his people who have received his spirit, follow him. And therefore they are called Christians. The name indicates their relation and their likeness to him who is the Christ.

II. We have already seen that true Christians are Christ's house in another sense: they are his building. "We are labourers together with God," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "ye are...God's building."⁴ "If so be ye have tasted," says St. Peter, "that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as unto a living stone...ye also, living stones, are built up a spiritual house."⁵ Christ who is God, is according to these Scriptures, the builder of this house. And the stones with which he builds are "living stones," i. e. hearts which have been made alive to God by the Holy Ghost,—which have tasted "that the Lord is gracious,"—which have been taught to confide in his love and to hope in his eternal mercy. These stones are builded together and cemented by his grace, "for an habitation of God through the Spirit."⁶ For all who have tasted the Redeemer's grace, are bound to each other by the most sacred ties; they are sustained by the same faith and animated by the same hope; they also

¹ Canticles viii. 5.² I Corinthians x. 13.³ Psalm xxiii. 4.⁴ I Cor. iii. 9.⁵ I Peter ii. 3—5, original.⁶ Ephes. ii. 22.

acknowledge the same Father who is in them all.¹ They "are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God."² It is so in measure even now, and shall be so indeed when the kingdom of Christ shall come. Jesus, the true Zerubbabel, whose hands laid the foundations of this house, shall bring forth its headstone with shoutings of grace,³ and God's saved people shall then be manifested to creation as his dwelling-place, from which his glory shall shine forth for evermore.

But "living stones" only can be builded into this spiritual house; all others are useless for the purpose of the heavenly Builder. He builds an habitation for God, and God cannot dwell in the unbelieving heart; unbelief shuts him out, grieves his Spirit, and provokes his anger. St. Paul therefore prays for the Ephesians, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."⁴ And so the sign to ourselves, that we are the building of the Lord, is that we are believing in God and trusting in his salvation. Convinced of our ruined state by nature, we shall be found trusting for our pardon and acceptance in Christ's blood, righteousness and intercession. We shall also be found looking to God as our Father, and rejoicing in that promise of life and glory which has been given to us in Christ our Lord. This faith and hope moreover will lift our affections above the world, and teach us to die to the things which are seen and temporal. We shall live to the praise of God, and for the things which are not seen and eternal.

And this must not be the case for a time only; the text warns us that this confidence and hope must be held "firm to the end." For whether we regard the believing Church as Christ's family or as his building, permanence is its essential characteristic. There is an impression of Divine things which is deep while it lasts, but is evanescent. Christ mentions, in the parable of the sower, four classes of gospel hearers. On the first it made no impression. The second and third however received it with gladness. But the one

¹ Ephes. iv. 4-6.² II Cor. vi. 16.³ Zech. iv. 7-9.⁴ Ephes. iii. 17.

was afraid of the world's frown, and the other could not part with its gains, and both in consequence fell back. The fourth class only, receiving the word with understanding, brought forth fruit with patience.¹ Various circumstances also may produce impressions of Divine truth on the mind. They may be produced by a religious education, or by our being thrown into the society of godly relatives and friends. Or a series of afflictive dispensations, and sad experience of the disappointment that is in all earthly things, may incline the heart to seek its happiness in God. And yet alas, as we witness continually, after a time these impressions die away. But in all such cases, real apprehension of Christ, and real faith in him, have been wanting. "They went out from us," says St. John, speaking of such persons in his day, "because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."² Real faith always abides. If we regard Christ as the Father of his people, the life which he communicates to their souls by the inspiration of his blessed Spirit, is as eternal as himself.³ His name is "the everlasting Father,"⁴ i. e. the Father of the life which cannot die. The life of his posterity was confided to the first Adam, and he lost it by falling from God. The life of his spiritual children is confided to Christ the second Adam, and it "is hid with him in God,"⁵ safe beyond the reach of harm; the malice even of Satan cannot kill that deathless principle. And so whatever that enemy has prevailed through his temptations to destroy, is proved, by his having destroyed it, not to have been the life of Christ. Again, if we regard Christ as the builder of his Church, what he builds, endures. When St. Peter confessed him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus pronounced him blessed, "for flesh and blood," he said, "hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And he added immediately, "on this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."⁶ The rock of which he here speaks is himself, in the character in which St. Peter had

¹ Matt. xlii. 18—23.² 1 John ii. 19.³ John xvii. 2, 3.⁴ Isaiah ix. 6.⁵ Colossians iii. 3.⁶ Matt. xvi. 16—18.

just confessed him, i.e. as the Christ, the Son of God. The Church builded on this rock is the people who have been taught of the Father, as St. Peter was taught, to know and believe in him as such. And he here declares expressly that against this people all the powers of darkness shall be unable to prevail. St. Peter himself is a remarkable example of this. "Simon, Simon," said the Lord, "behold Satan hath desired to have you...but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." And let us observe the result. Satan had him for a season, for he fell most grievously. But he was recovered again, for "the Lord turned and looked" on his servant, and he "went out and wept bitterly."¹ Satan may do much mischief. He may throw down alas, what pious parents or godly relatives have long laboured, and with apparent success, to build up; he may destroy the promising fruit of the zealous exertions of the faithful pastor. But Satan is not omnipotent, and there is one thing which he cannot do; he cannot throw down the building of the Lord. He may excite the tempest of persecution or dark temptation; the rain may descend, the floods may come, the winds may blow at his command: but they shall beat in vain against that house which Jesus has founded on the rock. The people whom he has taught to fix their confidence and hope in him he shall maintain in that hope and confidence "firm unto the end."

Such is the doctrine of St. Paul, as delivered in the text before us. Superficial readers may understand him to mean that provided we hold fast our confidence in Christ to the end, we shall be of his family and of his building. But this is very far indeed from being his real meaning. God does not promise to reward a life of faith by receiving us into Christ's family and building us into his Church; such an idea destroys the very nature of faith. Our faith in the Lord Jesus is the sign that we belong to his family, and that we have been builded by him into his spiritual house. But true faith in us, as in St. Peter, is the result of Divine teaching; and wherever it exists therefore, it is permanent. It shall sustain us amid the trials and troubles, the changes

¹ Luke xxii. 31, 32; 61, 62.

and chances of time; it shall prepare us for the vision of God's glory in eternity. Well then might the Lord Jesus, when he recognized this sacred principle in St. Peter, say, "BLESSED ART THOU, Simon Barjona!"

And we are all equally blessed if we have been taught to make Christ our confidence and hope. Let us consider the prospects which he sets before his people, what it is to be the dwelling-place of God, the temple in which his glory is unveiled, and to which, in the age to come, all creation shall resort, to pay its adoring homage to the great Creator! Let us consider what it is to dwell with Christ as children, to be gladdened for ever by his fatherly smile, to go in and out before him in the fearless confidence of love! There is a most amazing union of majesty and condescension in the Saviour. When St. John saw him in his glory, he "fell at his feet as dead."¹ And yet the same St. John had often lain on his bosom. When he came forth from the grave, the glory even of his attendant ministers paralysed the hardy Roman soldiers with fear.² And yet we find that Divine Redeemer on whose high behests these ministers humbly waited, speaking to his disciples in the tender accents of a father—"children, have ye any meat... come and dine."³ And in the same accents of tenderness shall he speak to his saved ones for ever. His glory shall not affright us when we eat and drink at his table, in his kingdom; he shall shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his eternal kindness towards us. May God teach all of us who have proved the consolation of these hopes, to purify ourselves as Christ is pure! And if any of us are yet strangers to them because we are yet strangers to the Saviour, may He be pleased of His infinite mercy to reveal that Saviour in our hearts!

¹ Rev. i. 17.

² Matthew xxviii 2-4.

³ John xxi. 5-13.

LECTURE III.

Hebrews iii. 7—11.

"Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest."

HAVING shewed to the Hebrews that they were Christ's house, if they held firm to the end their confidence and hope in him, St. Paul is led now, in the natural progress of his discourse, to warn them solemnly and earnestly against the sin of unbelief. And to render this warning more impressive, he takes as the basis of it, a similar warning of the Holy Ghost to their fathers in the days of David. This quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures serves his purpose also in another way. Reference is made in it to the generation which came out of Egypt under the conduct of Moses, but afterwards, through unbelief, came short of the rest of God. And as St. Paul has just been shewing that Christ is greater than Moses, this reference enables him to demonstrate, as we shall see in subsequent lectures, the certain and more dreadful doom of those who are disobedient to Christ.

Keeping in mind these preliminary observations, let us now consider particularly the contents of the Scripture before us. St. Paul introduces his quotation in a somewhat remarkable manner.

Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith.

This expression is not to be passed by; it contains the testimony of an inspired Apostle to two most important truths. We learn from it first, the plenary inspiration of the holy Scriptures; they are the words of the Holy Ghost. It is not an uncommon opinion, that the inspired writers were merely kept from error in the execution of their honourable task. But such an idea lowers the dignity of the Divine word exceedingly, making it in fact, cease to be Divine. How very different is the testimony borne to it in the text! St. Paul is quoting the words of David, and yet he tells us that "the Holy Ghost saith." He declares the same thing in another place, calling it "the word of Christ."¹ And Christ confirms his servant's testimony. He repelled the charge of blasphemy in the days of his flesh, by a reference to an apparently accidental phrase in the Psalms, adding these remarkable words, "the Scripture cannot be broken."² It is most important that our minds be established in this truth. For just in proportion to our confidence in holy Scripture, and veneration for it, as the book of the law of the Lord, shall we be disposed to devote our nights and days to meditation on its sacred contents. We learn second, from this language of St. Paul, the personality of the Holy Ghost: an influence cannot speak. His Divinity also is implied; for his words are referred to, as the words of God. And this testimony is the more valuable, because it follows so closely on the positive assertion and laboured demonstration of the personality and Divinity of the Son. For as no one doubts the Father's Divinity and personality, we have thus apostolic testimony to a Trinity in the Godhead. And it is most comforting to observe that the Hebrews required no proof either of the true character of the Scriptures, or of the personality of the blessed Spirit. St. Paul's language implies that they were familiar with both these truths. And they were familiar with them, be it remembered, not as Christians merely, but as Jews. We find the mystery of the Trinity, in the writings of the Jewish Rabbis, long before the time of the Saviour. When Jesus called himself the

¹ Colossians iii. 16.² John x. 34—36.

Son of God, his enemies expressed no surprise at hearing of a Son in the Godhead; they only said, and said truly, that in assuming that name, he made himself equal with God.¹ Nor did the Virgin ask the angel to whom he referred, when he said, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee."² For these Divine mysteries were not unknown, even to unlearned and private persons in the ancient Jewish Church. There is indeed one Scripture-text which seems to say the contrary. We read that St. Paul when at Ephesus, met with certain Jewish disciples, who said, "we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."³ But these words are evidently a mistranslation. The persons in question were disciples of St. John Baptist, who had preached the promise of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. And when the Apostle therefore asked them whether they had received this promised blessing, they said in reply, we have not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost be yet given. He was not to be given till Jesus was glorified.⁴

But we must not dwell longer on St. Paul's manner of introducing his quotation: let us proceed to the quotation itself.

To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in THE BITTER PROVOCATION, in the day of THE temptation in the wilderness. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation and said, they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.

These words are taken from the ninety-fifth Psalm, which is supposed to have been indited and sung on the removal of the ark to Jerusalem, in the days of David. That Divine ode consists of two parts. In the first seven verses God's people, answering each other in alternate chorus, stir themselves up to worship him as Jehovah, their Maker, and the Rock of their salvation, a great God and King. "Let us

¹ John v. 17, 18.

² Luke i. 35.

³ Acts xix. 2.

⁴ John vii. 39.

come before his presence with thanksgiving," they exclaim, "and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms: for he is the Lord our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." And the last four verses, which are cited by St. Paul in the text, contain Jehovah's warning from his oracle to his people thus assembling to wait on him. Harden not your hearts, he says, and be not like your fathers; for I sware in my wrath concerning them, that they should not enter into my rest.

No one can compare this Psalm with the chapter from which the text is taken, without being arrested by the perfect identity between them. In the Psalm the worshippers call themselves the people of God's pasture and the sheep of his hand; for this sacred character belongs to you, says the one chorus of singers answering the other,¹ "to day, if ye will hear his voice." We have then the solemn warning which God addresses to these worshippers, to take heed lest by refusing to hear, they lost all title to this character, and finally came short of his rest. St. Paul in like manner addresses the Hebrews as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." But to shew them that he does so only in the judgment of charity, he adds immediately, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope." And he then applies to them the very warning which God gave to his ancient worshippers. Harden not your hearts, he says, and provoke not God by unbelief, lest you lose his favour and come short of his rest. All this is most important for us. We are God's people by covenant and profession, as the Jews were in the days of Moses, as the same Jews in the days of David, and as the Hebrews in the days of St. Paul. We avouch this to be true continually. We come into God's sanctuary and worship him in the language of this very Psalm. We proclaim him as our God and the Rock of our salvation, and declare ourselves to be the people of his pasture. But are we all therefore necessarily on the way to his eternal rest? If the high character to which we lay claim truly belongs to us, we are. But God warns us as he

¹ Horsley on the Psalms.

warned his ancient worshippers, to see that this indeed be the case. And here let me say a word in defence of our Apostolic Church. She has been blamed exceedingly for addressing all her members as the people of God, for calling them members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. For it is said that by this language she deceives men's souls, leading them to believe that all is well with them. But the Church of England only follows in this, the example of the Psalmist and of St. Paul. We have all been accepted by God in baptism as his children, and we all profess to have received his grace. On the ground therefore of this covenant on God's part, and profession on our own part, the Church addresses us as she does. But she tells us at the same time, of the necessity of "a true penitent heart and lively faith;" she restricts God's absolution to those "who truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel;" she teaches us to seek his grace that we may please him now by a pure and holy life, and thus at last attain to his eternal joy. All this, I repeat, the Church tells us faithfully, and having done so, she leaves our responsibility on ourselves. She can do no more for us, except she were to judge our hearts. And to judge the heart is the inalienable prerogative of the Almighty.

Let us now consider the Divine warning of the text, in its application, first, to those to whom it was addressed originally; second, to the Hebrews to whom St. Paul addresses it; and third, to ourselves.

I. The sin of their fathers, against which God warned his people in the days of David, was hardness of heart, shewing itself in suspicion and distrust of him. "Your fathers tempted me" is his language. They tempted him by suspecting his sincerity. He had visited Egypt with ten plagues for their sakes; he had drowned Pharaoh and his host, while he led them through the sea dryshod; he was proceeding before them as their guide in the pillar of cloud and fire. Nevertheless, in the midst of all these demonstrations of the sincerity of his love, and when their song of praise on the banks of the Red Sea was scarcely ended, they accused him

of having brought them forth into the wilderness, "to kill this whole assembly with hunger."¹ But he rained bread from heaven for them: and thus they "proved me," the Lord continues, whether I was capable of the foul design. Untaught however by this experience of his mercy, they no sooner felt the want of water than they accused him again of having brought them out of Egypt to kill them and their children and their cattle with thirst!² And on this occasion they again proved him, for Moses by his command smote the rock, and there came water out of it, and the people drank their fill. And as it had begun, so it continued. They went on for forty years, tempting God by their suspicions, seeing his works and witnessing his interpositions on their behalf, proving thereby the falsehood and wickedness of these suspicions, and yet suspecting him still. It was this which grieved him with that generation. "They do always err in their heart," he said, misconceiving of my holy character, and they have not understood my ways of faithfulness and mercy towards them. But the most prominent manifestation of this evil heart of unbelief was on the borders of the promised land. On that occasion they dared to say that God had brought them out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness, to deliver them into the hand of the Amorites, to slay them!³ This was their crowning offence. It was then that God expressed that judgment of their character to which I have just referred, and swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. This happened at the beginning of the forty years, not at the end of them, as the text appears to say. But the wording of the text is doubtless intentional. And the intention, I believe, is to teach us that during that long period of their subsequent history their unchanged character of unbelief proved the truth of the Divine judgment, and justified the Divine severity.

This solemn warning teaches very striking lessons. It displays in a most awful manner the malignant and inveterate character of unbelief. Israel distrusted God in

¹ Exodus xvi. 3, 4.² Exodus xvii. 3—6.³ Numbers xiv. 3.

the wilderness, a place in which their countless thousands had no means of subsistence, except the continual miraculous supplies of that providence which never failed them. They were also separated from the idolatrous Egyptians, so that they had none to tempt them to disbelieve the Lord. They were privileged with the instructious, warnings and admonitions of Moses, the greatest prophet in word and deed whom the world had ever seen. And they were eye-witnesses from day to day of the manifestations of the divine glory. But all these things combined failed to teach them faith; they disbelieved God still, nay they went on, even while every day's experience made his faithfulness manifest, to disbelieve him for forty years. And surely this proves, if anything can prove it, that man's unbelief is not the result of circumstances; that it proceeds from his own evil heart; and that it is absolutely incurable, save by the power of Omnipotence. We learn also from this warning, the provoking character of unbelief. The language used is particularly strong. "Harden not your hearts," says Jehovah, "as in the bitter provocation, in the day of the temptation." He speaks as if he had never been provoked, as if he had never been tempted till then. The sins of the old world were so provoking, that he destroyed it by the flood. The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were so provoking, that he rained fire from heaven upon them. But both these examples are passed by, and in warning against hardness of heart, he points to the unbelief of Israel in the desert as its most bitterly-provoking manifestation. We learn finally, from this warning, the desert and punishment of unbelief. It forfeited to Israel the promised land, in which God would have given them rest, dwelling in the midst of them as their God and King. Unbelief deserves such a punishment because of its malignant character, and because it is the parent of every other sin. Those who have no faith in God, can never learn his ways.

It is easy to see the application of all this to the Jews in the days of David. They were then bringing up the ark to Jerusalem, the place of which God had said, "this is my

rest...here will I dwell."¹ He therefore reminds them of the sin and punishment of their fathers. They were hard-hearted and unbelieving, he says, and I swear to exclude them from my rest. The children were thus admonished not to follow their fathers' ways. They were reminded that an unbelieving people never should be privileged with God's sacred presence in the midst of them. But alas, they took not the warning, and God's word was, in consequence, but too truly fulfilled.

II. St. Paul applies this warning to the Hebrews, in urging them to be obedient to Christ. There is a peculiar fitness in the application. He has just been telling them that this Divine Redeemer sought to build them up as his spiritual house, and to gather them round him as his family, in the midst of whom he might dwell. He therefore beseeches them to hear "HIS VOICE" while the day of salvation lasted; reminding them, by the very language made use of, that the Saviour who now spake to them was the God who had spoken to their fathers in the days of David. He has also been proving to them that this Saviour was the Father's Apostle, sent to lead them to the land of eternal rest, and that by reason of the Divinity of his person, he was worthy of more glory than Moses. He therefore reminds them of that generation whom Moses was appointed to lead from Egypt to Canaan, and who, for rebelling against his guidance and refusing God's word in his mouth, were excluded from the promised land. For this terrible dealing was the most emphatic of all warnings: it taught them that they should most certainly be excluded from God's eternal rest, if they rebelled against the guidance and refused the life-giving word of that Divine Redeemer, whose servant and humble minister their illustrious prophet had been. Their privileges moreover were as great as those of that favoured generation. For they also had proved the Lord, and seen his works. The incarnation of the Son of God, his life of wondrous love, his death of unspeakable mercy, had passed almost before their eyes. And these things had surely proved him to be

¹ Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14.

"full of grace and truth," proved the depth and tenderness of his Divine compassion. And the miraculous works of mercy which were wrought in his name by the power of the Holy Ghost, after he rose from the dead, those "signs following," with which the Lord, seated on the right hand of the Father, confirmed the word of his grace,¹ were with them matters of daily experience and observation. Unbelief on their part had therefore no apology. Like that of their fathers in the desert, it could arise from nothing but hardness of heart. They were shutting their hearts against the claims of love, and closing their eyes that they might not behold the glorious working of God's mighty hand. That love had appeared in the Cross of the humbled Saviour, and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven had displayed, and was even then displaying, both in the Church and in the world, the omnipotence of the risen Lord. And if notwithstanding all this they were still found erring in their hearts, misconceiving the Divine character, and not knowing the way of salvation, St. Paul warns them that like their fathers of old, they were grieving God's Spirit, tempting him, and bitterly provoking him to swear in his wrath concerning them, that they should not enter into his rest.

III. And though we admit without hesitation the claims of Jesus as the Christ, and entertain not the slightest doubt of his infinite superiority to Moses, this warning applies to us. For we have the same obduracy of heart with the Jews in the days of Moses and of David, and with the Hebrews in the days of St. Paul. It leads us to deny to the Lord our love and confidence, though we have proved him and seen his works. It leads us to err in our hearts concerning him, and prevents us from knowing his holy ways. These things grieve his Spirit, tempt him and provoke him bitterly. And while they do so, they expose us to the fearful danger of coming short of his eternal rest.

The Lord Jesus, in one of his parables, thus speaks of the heart of man. "Behold a sower went forth to sow: and some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and

¹ Mark xvi. 19, 20.

devoured them up." And he adds in explanation, "when any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he who received seed by the way-side."¹ Now this is just the case with the vast majority of gospel-hearers; they hear and understand not, and Satan catches the word away. But this lack of understanding arises from hardness of heart. How very striking is the similitude by which the Lord would teach us this truth! Does the husbandman sow *the way-side* in spring, and return in autumn, to receive the crop? If he does so, he is disappointed; the hardness of the ground has prevented the seed from entering. And such is the heart of man in reference to the word of God; it rejects it in its impenetrable obduracy. We must admit the truth of this, if we are honest with ourselves. We have heard of the love of Jesus, for we have been told in the blessed gospel, that he laid down his life for our salvation. We have heard of the blood of his Cross which has taken away our sins, and of the Father's forgiveness proclaimed through the risen Saviour. We have received these things moreover into our creeds, and they are enrolled among our articles of faith. But have they sunk into our hearts, have they drawn these hearts to God? Do we love the Lord Jesus, because he has loved us? Are we trusting in his blood for our pardon, and enjoying, through faith in that blood, the peace of assured forgiveness, the peace which passeth understanding? Are we leaning on the Saviour's gracious arm for support, as we travel up through this wilderness, to the heavenly country? Are we looking for his mercy, unto eternal life? Those of us with whom it is so, will, I am sure, acknowledge that the natural hardness of their hearts has been softened, and that these blessed lessons have been taught them by the grace of God. But with the vast majority of gospel-hearers this, alas, is not the case. Religion is a form with them. Confidence in a Saviour's love, peace of conscience in his blood, and the blessed hope of everlasting life are things which they do not

¹ Matthew xiii. 3, 4, 19.

understand. And notwithstanding the revelation which the Cross of Christ has made of the love and mercy of God, they err concerning him in their hearts, and do not know his ways. Instead of regarding him as a Father and esteeming his commandments perfect freedom, they think of him as a hard master and complain of the strictness of his law. Christ speaks in the gospel, in the accents of tenderness and love, but men are so occupied with the engrossing cares of business, the acquisition of wealth, or the pursuit of pleasure, that they cannot "hear his voice." And so it awakens in their bosoms no response of love, of grateful confidence or of joyful hope. But those who thus neglect the Saviour, are grieving the Spirit of their God, and by doing so, tempt and provoke him to swear in his wrath against them. He will thus swear, alas, concerning multitudes in the day when his judgment is revealed; and the oath shall declare their sentence of exclusion from his rest to be irreversible and eternal. Let not Satan persuade us that God cannot be so severe. In his judgment this severity is to his honour. He prefaced the sentence of Israel's exclusion from Canaan with the remarkable words, "as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."¹ And in conformity with this, the Church teaches us, when we worship him in the sanctuary, in the words of this very Psalm, repeating the solemn warning and fearful threatening which it contains, to add to our devotion an ascription of eternal glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Have we ever considered what is meant by this addition? It is on our part a continual acknowledgment that if we are found at last to have neglected the Saviour, God will be glorified eternally in our final exclusion from bliss.

There are many who answer to all this, we confess it to be true. We acknowledge the hardness of our hearts, and that we are at this moment utterly indisposed to listen to Christ's voice. But do not let us be esteemed on this account as reprobates, for we fully purpose, another day, to attend to the concerns of eternity. The text meets here the self-

¹ Numbers xiv. 21.

deceiving heart, bidding us not boast of to-morrow. "To-day," it says, "if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," i. e. if you mean to listen to Christ's voice, listen to it now, delay only hardens the heart. And this is the counsel of wisdom and truth, verified, alas, in the mournful experience of thousands. The youth of twenty years says, give me for a while my fill of youthful pleasure, I will think of salvation again. See him when ten years have passed over his head. Pleasure then has greatly lost its power, but something else has risen up in its stead. The world has begun to be an object of serious interest, and has already entangled his heart in its ensnaring net. He is more indisposed than he was before to listen to the word of salvation; a convenient season, he says, has not yet come. Ten years more pass over him. You find him then entirely occupied with the all-absorbing cares and interests of time, and without a thought to spare for eternity. The word of God is more distasteful than ever; I cannot attend to it yet, he says. Subsequent years only increase the evil. The conscience becomes seared through long trifling with known duty; the moral feelings become blunted through intercourse with the world; the warnings, threatenings and promises of God's word lose their power of impressing the heart; and by degrees that heart surrenders itself, without further struggle, to the dominion of unbelief. The unhappy man at last forgets that he ever cherished the purpose of one day thinking of God, comes to the conclusion that it is not needful to think of him, and dies, as he has lived, in confirmed neglect of the Saviour. But even if procrastination did not thus harden the heart, to-day is the time to hear Christ's voice, for no one is sure of to-morrow. We may all be in health at this moment, but we have no security for the next; our souls may at any time be required of us. Besides, the Holy Ghost is a Sovereign, and will not always strive with man. And to trifle for a single moment with his earnest exhortations, is to tempt him to forsake us for ever.

But there are others of a different mould. They listen to the exhortation of the text and say, Would God we could

comply with it! We desire to hear Christ's voice, we would cease from tempting and grieving and provoking his holy Spirit, we would fain be made meet for his eternal rest. But our hard hearts will not permit us, and alas, we cannot soften them. To such I say, Who exhorts you to hear the voice of your Saviour, who bids you cease from provoking him, who warns you to take heed lest you be excluded from his rest? Read in the text; it is **THE HOLY GHOST**. It is **HIS BLESSED WILL** then that you listen to the voice of Jesus, that you cease to grieve him by your unbelief, that you learn his holy ways, and at last attain to his kingdom. And he who wills this, has also power to effect it. For it is the Holy Ghost who enables us to hear the gospel savingly, who takes out the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh, who creates us in Christ Jesus unto good works, who makes us meet for the kingdom of God. Oh that I could convey to every mourning and dejected soul the consolation of this precious thought! It is not the will of the Holy Ghost, that sin and unbelief should have dominion over us. Let us only realize this, and their dominion is for ever ended. To complain of our hard hearts will never soften them. Let us realize it as the will of the Holy Ghost that we should be the faithful people of Jesus, and we shall find spiritual strength to become so. For he who commands us is the mighty God, and his command gives power to obey. Let us not tempt him then by saying that we would fain be his people, but that he denies to us his grace. The text tells us that we are "the sheep of his hand **TO-DAY**, if ye will hear his voice." Nothing then but disinclination on our part prevents us from being so, from being so at this very moment. For the great God deals honestly with us his poor creatures. And the exhortation of the Holy Ghost in the text, contains in it an implied assurance that from none who are disposed to obey him shall his omnipotent grace be withheld. May he then so dispose us, for his glory's sake!

LECTURE IV.

Hebrews iii. 12—14.

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”

WE have seen with what earnestness St. Paul has pressed upon the Hebrews the warning of the Holy Ghost to their fathers. He now goes on to make that warning the basis of exhortation from himself, taking up and dwelling particularly on each of the points contained in it. It has spoken of the hard and deceitful heart, of the sin of provoking and grieving the Lord, and of the dreadful punishment which overtook that sin in the case of the Israelites in the wilderness; and he dwells, as we shall see, on these points successively, to the close of the present chapter. In the verses before us, he makes the first and second of them his subject, warning the Hebrews to take heed of the hard and unbelieving heart, and reminding them of the deceitfulness of sin. We shall consider his words, first, in their application to those to whom they were originally addressed, and second, in their application to God's people, whether Jews or Gentiles, to the end of time.

Before we enter however on this special consideration of the text, let us observe the distinct chain of meaning which connects its three verses. We have an exhortation against unbelief,—

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

We have next a preventive suggested for this monstrous mischief,—

But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

And we have finally the necessity of using this and every other preventive urged in the strongest manner.

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

All this was most apposite to the circumstances of the Hebrews, and is equally applicable to us.

I. The Hebrews had been instructed by St. Paul in the Divinity of Messiah's person. They had been told that he had come out from the bosom of the Father, as the messenger of his mercy and truth, and that the Holy Ghost commanded them to hear his voice. They had been further told that he was now seeking to build them up as his spiritual house, and to gather them round him as his family, in the midst of whom he might dwell. And finally, they had been warned that by unbelief on their part they might forfeit this intended mercy, and come short of this amazing grace. They are now therefore entreated by him who had thus instructed and warned them, entreated to take heed of the evil, unbelieving heart. This evil heart shews itself, he tells them, "in departing from the living God." The context makes it evident that by this designation he intends the Saviour. He has just declared him to be the God who spake to their fathers in the days of David, and whom Israel grieved and provoked in the desert. And his purpose now is to warn the children not to "tempt Christ,"¹ as their fathers also tempted. "The living God," moreover, is Christ's true name. For he is God, the possessor

¹ 1 Corinthians x. 9.

of life, and his word communicates life. "The word was God," says St. John, "in him was life."¹ "The words that I speak unto you," says Jesus himself, "they are spirit, and they are life." It was because the twelve experienced this, that when others departed from him, they continued faithful. "Lord, to whom shall we go," said St. Peter, "thou hast the words of eternal life."² Now this living God had come unto his own Hebrew nation, and his own, instead of receiving him, had set at nought and crucified him.³ But instead of departing from them for this offence, he was still presenting himself to Israel as a Prince and a Saviour,⁴ as the true Moses, the messenger whom the Father had sent to lead them to the land of eternal rest. And St. Paul therefore entreats them not to depart from him. He also characterizes the heart which would depart, as the "evil heart of unbelief." As if he would say, Do not charge your sin on your circumstances; think not to forsake your Saviour and say that the force of persecution compelled you. His presence and promised help can strengthen you to meet the most appalling trials. If you forsake him then, the cause is in yourselves; you have never truly believed in his love. For those who confide in Jesus, and have tasted that he is gracious, will answer, when tempted to forsake him, "Lord to whom shall we go?"

But though the Apostle could thus write, he was not insensible to the trials of the Hebrew Church, and of the danger of forsaking Christ, to which such trials exposed them. He therefore proposes a remedy for the evil. That remedy is brotherly love. You must watch, every one over his brother, he tells them, for you stand as an united phalanx, and if "any of you" be thrown down by the enemy, the strength of the phalanx is broken. Make it your daily business then, by words of godly counsel and encouragement, to hold up each others' hands. And if you discern in a brother any indication of a heart wavering in its faith and allegiance to Christ, exhort him, "while it is called to-day;" for such is the deceitfulness of sin that before to-morrow the

¹ John i. 1, 4. ² John vi. 68, 69. ³ John i. 10, 11. ⁴ Acts v. 30, 31.

mischief may be past repair, he may be lost irrecoverably both to Christ and to you. St. Paul next proceeds to urge upon the Hebrews the necessity of this mutual watchfulness. Neither you nor I, he says, shall be made partakers of Christ's salvation, because we have once confided in him; we must maintain this confidence steadfast to the end. At a time then when the enemy is seeking by all means to shake it, a regard even to our own salvation requires that we thus stand on our watch-tower, and be "not ignorant of his devices."

II. All this, as has been already remarked, applies to us as much as to the Hebrews. For we have the same hearts with them, and are exposed to the same spiritual perils. That we have the same hearts was pointed out in the last lecture. Man's natural heart ever since the fall has been a heart of unbelief, i.e. a heart predisposed to distrust God; yea "an evil heart of unbelief," for nothing can be more evil than such a disposition. And the effects are as evil as the cause. Disbelieving God's love to us we refuse our affections in return; we depart from the living God. For love believed excites love back again. And where confidence is not won, it is impossible to win affection.

Since the beginning of the world there never was such an exhibition of this truth, such an exhibition of this evil heart of unbelief, and of these its most evil results, as in the history referred to in the context. Everything which God could do, was done to win the confidence of Israel in the wilderness. He smote Egypt; he dried the Red Sea; he guided them through the desert in the pillar of cloud and fire; he brought water for them out of the flinty rock, and gave them bread from heaven. He never departed from them. The manna was not missed for a single morning, nor the pillar of cloud for a single day, nor the pillar of fire throughout the darkness of a single night, for forty years. But for all this "they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation."¹ So that the Lord himself marvelled, saying to Moses, "how long will it be ere they believe me for all the signs which I have shewed among them."² And

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 22.

² Numbers xiv. 11.

as the natural result of this unbelief, they departed from him. His love utterly failed to elicit any return of abiding gratitude or affection; they obeyed him indeed, but chiefly through the constraint of fear. For when that constraint was removed, and they imagined that they might choose for themselves, even the semblance of regard and of obedience ceased. I refer, in this remark, to what took place at Sinai. Moses had been apart with God for forty days, and Israel supposed that he did not intend to return to them. And they immediately discovered what was in their hearts, by displacing Jehovah and setting a golden calf in his room! Here was departing from the living God indeed! And they departed also from his holy ways, for "the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."¹ They served the god whom they had set up, by indulging in gluttony and drunkenness, by lascivious dancing, and by all the impurities of heathen worship. They had witnessed these obscene rites in Egypt, and they preferred them in their hearts to the pure worship of the Lord. Let us pause and contemplate this astonishing transaction; it is the most striking of all commentaries on the text. These were the people who had never learned to trust Jehovah. And behold the consequence; they preferred to his eternal majesty "the similitude of an ox that eateth grass!"² They also polluted the immediate vicinity of that mountain on which he had descended for the gracious purpose of instructing them, with the abominable orgies of heathenism! Surely the heart of unbelief is evil—evil in its character, and dreadfully evil in its results.

But Israel in the desert is not the only generation of men to whom the Almighty has been gracious; he is loving to every man, and his tender mercies are over all his works. We have experienced this abundantly, for we have received from his hand "life and breath and all things:"³ He is our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer. Every one of us is to himself, in the wonderful mechanism of his body, and in the still more wonderful inspiration of his soul, a witness of his

¹ Exodus xxxii. 1—6.² Psalm cvi. 20.³ Acts xvii. 25.

Creator's love. And our gracious Preserver's love is written on every crust of bread, on every cup of cold water, on the sound sleep of every night, on the protection and keeping of every day. It is written on our parents' early care, on the blessings of education and of friendship, and on the thousand comforts which render life agreeable. God in bestowing these benefits has "not left *himself* without witness,"¹ and "God is Love."² And these mercies are not worthy to be mentioned, when compared with the stupendous benefits of redemption. He thought on us in our lost estate and sent his Son as the propitiation for our sins; he also raised him from the dead to bless us. And that this may prove effectual to our salvation, he has bestowed on us the means of grace. He has indited holy Scripture and put it into our hands: He has appointed the blessed sacraments: He has instituted the ministry of the word. But notwithstanding all this, he does not win our confidence, and fails, in consequence, to win our love. Israel in the desert is not, alas, the only generation which has repaid his good with evil. We follow their example but too faithfully, if God leaves us to ourselves; we are all found departing from him whose loving kindness has never departed from us.

The proof of this is only too easy. It is evidently true of one class of men, the openly vicious. They live in the impurities of the flesh, trampling on the commandments of God, and do not conceal their hatred either of him or of his ways. And unbelief is the parent of this profligacy: men could not act thus towards God, if they believed his love to them. But vicious men, it may be answered, acknowledge the benefits of creation and providence, and many of them assent to the truth of the sublime mysteries of redemption. This however is not faith. Israel acknowledged that God had smitten Egypt and dried the Red Sea for them; they acknowledged that he was daily raining bread from heaven for their food, and guiding them by his miraculous presence. And yet Scripture calls them unbelievers. Because though they admitted these benefits, they never were convinced in

¹ Acts xiv. 17.

² 1 John iv. 8.

their hearts that sincere and genuine love on the part of God bestowed them. Now THIS is unbelief. It is, while admitting the fact of the divine benefits, to deny the lesson of the fact. It was this which made Israel in the desert depart from the living God, and it is the same evil principle still which makes vicious men, while acknowledging that they are surrounded on every hand by God's mercies, trample on the Giver of them, and wantonly grieve his Spirit. They do not believe that these mercies proceed from love. But the openly vicious are not the only class who depart from the living God: the worldly-minded are another. I separate this class from the former, because in many instances they are moral, decent and inoffensive in their behaviour. But their joys, their hopes, their comforts are confined to this present world, and entirely bounded by it; and therefore in the judgment of God, "they have forsaken him, the fountain of living waters," and hewn out unto themselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."¹ He is called "the fountain of living waters," because he is the exhaustless source of living joy. In loving him our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, in keeping his commandments and striving to please him, and in the consciousness of his approving smile, there is present and soul-satisfying joy, the foretaste of that which is eternal. And to turn away from this and seek our happiness in the creature, is the sin which the text now quoted so emphatically condemns. But it is the sin of the class of which I am now speaking; God is no source of enjoyment to them; the creature is their all. And it is unbelief, I have again to remark, which is the cause of this fearful estrangement. Like the former class, they admit the Divine benefits, and assent to the doctrines of the faith. But these doctrines are the mere articles of a creed, and have never revealed to them "the living God;" they have no faith in his love as a reality, and therefore they depart from him. And there is another class still who are chargeable with this sin, the self-righteous. They differ materially from both the former classes, for they believe that they have

¹ Jeremiah II. 13.

souls to be saved, and are in earnest about their salvation. But "being ignorant of God's righteousness," i. e. of the Divine mercy already revealed in Christ, they go about "to establish their own,"¹ seeking by their assiduous attendance in God's house, and their good works out of it, to purchase his favour and eternal life. Their religion is thus based on unbelief, and the bitter fruit appears; it is a religion of mere formality. They do not seek the retirement of their closets to pour out their hearts before God, or frequent his sanctuary that they may be instructed in the knowledge of his will, or approach his holy table that they may have communion with him who died for them. These things are to them unmeaning and uninteresting outward services, engaged in for an ulterior, selfish end. And thus, though differing in many respects from the other classes mentioned, they agree with them in the great feature which always marks unbelief, they depart from the living God.

Now these three classes comprehend all mankind, except those only who have been taught of God's Spirit, and renewed in their minds, by the operation of his grace. And we may therefore rest assured, unless this is the case with us, that we belong to one or other of them. If it is so, I need not say that we require the exhortation of the text; for unless we take heed of this heart of unbelief and are delivered from its fatal operation, it will separate us from God eternally. And even if it is otherwise, even if the glory of God has so shone into our hearts that believing in his love we have been turned away from every other source of enjoyment, to find our happiness in himself alone, we still require this exhortation. For "the infection of nature,"² as the Church teaches, still remains in us though we be the people of God; our natural tendencies are subdued, but not eradicated. And to prevent them from having the mastery over us, continual watchfulness is required.

But we are not left to ourselves in the performance of this necessary duty. God has connected us together, and the Apostle enjoins mutual watchfulness expressing itself in

¹ Romans x. 3.

² Article ix.

mutual exhortation and warning. This watchfulness and exhortation ought to be continual; "exhort one another daily," is the counsel of the holy Apostle. Nothing can teach more strikingly than such language does, that brotherly love is of the very essence of Christianity. And it teaches in a manner equally striking, that the service and glory of God is, with the true Christian, a matter of daily and unceasing interest. Is there any of us, let me ask, who dislikes to hear these things? Does any heart among us whisper, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Or do we say, Religion suits very well for the sanctuary and for holy seasons, but we cannot be always thinking of it? The heart which harbours such thoughts is departing from the living God. "He that loveth not," says St. John, "knoweth not God, for God is Love."¹ And we learn from that prayer, which Christ indited, as at once the expression and the guide of his people's devotion, that the true Christian feels as sensibly his daily need of grace to preserve him from the temptations of the wicked one, as of bread to nourish and sustain his body. It is not without a reason then that the injunction of St. Paul before us, to give and receive exhortation daily, follows immediately on his solemn warning against departing from the living God. There is a most beautiful connection between these counsels of wisdom; he who is listening to the first, will be preserved from the danger of which the second so emphatically warns us. And this daily exhortation must be necessary, for otherwise it would not be pressed on us. What makes it necessary is the nature of sin, which is hardening and yet deceitful. In other words, it hardens the heart before we are aware, and the more the heart is hardened the less aware do we become. While we keep near to God, the heart is very soft, and we are alive to the least coldness of affection, the least failure in duty, the least trespass on his holy laws. But as we depart from God, the heart becomes gradually hardened, and in exact proportion to such growing hardness we become less aware of its existence. The more men run on in sin, the less they are always found to

¹ 1 John iv. 8.

think of it; and those who have wandered farthest from God, are the very persons whom it is most difficult to convince that they have ever strayed from him at all. For sin benumbs the feelings, and in time, destroys them. We need not wonder then that St. Paul enjoins us, when we perceive sin in a brother, to exhort him "while it is called to-day." For the feelings which are quick to-day, may to-morrow be benumbed; and he who to-day has a heart soft and impressible, which will receive admonition, may be hardened to-morrow, and reject it to his eternal destruction. One has heard of the effect of the atmosphere on the heights of the Alps: it benumbs the traveller and sets him asleep, and if he sleeps he never wakes again. And one has heard of those who guide travellers through these Alpine solitudes, calling out to them every moment, *Keep each other awake, for if you sleep, you die*. Such is the meaning of St. Paul in the words which we are now considering. Appointed by God as the spiritual guide of his people through the dangerous, soul-benumbing atmosphere of this present evil world, which if it once takes effect on the spiritual system, brings over it the sleep of eternal death, he calls on us to exercise continual watchfulness. Keep each other awake, he says, to the realities of God's love, of Christ's salvation, of your eternal hopes in him; if you sleep, you die eternally.

But though this apostolic injunction includes private brotherly admonition, it has principal reference, I doubt not, to assemblies for the worship of God. The Hebrews and other believers of apostolic times, assembled for this purpose daily. And the Church being then, what, alas, she is not now, filled with the Holy Ghost, her private members were able, on these occasions, to teach and admonish one another.¹ This duty now devolves entirely on the overburdened pastor. I say overburdened, not because his duty is burdensome, but because more is required of him, in the present state of the Church, than human diligence and zeal can possibly perform. He cannot read the heart, and so cannot tell with certainty the spiritual state of any of his

¹ Romans xv. 14.; II Cor. viii. 7.

people. But the word of God assures him that they have all, by nature, that evil heart of unbelief which leads them to depart from him. He knows therefore but too certainly that unless his grace has taught them otherwise, they are all departing from him, in some one of the ways already set forth in this discourse. And He learns from the same authority, that even if his grace has bestowed on them another heart, they need continual instruction and admonition to keep them in the right way. In these circumstances it is required of him that He exhort them "while it is called to-day," setting the word of God fully and faithfully before them, and leaving the blessed Spirit to apply it as their several cases and varying spiritual conditions make such application needful. But who is sufficient for so weighty and responsible a task as this? A full and faithful setting forth of the word of God, implies a true exhibition of the Divine character; an exhibition of God in his love and mercy, in his holiness and justice; an exhibition of him in the harmony of his attributes, that he may be commended to his people as the worthy object of their love and reverence, that they may take him for their God, their Friend and their Father. It implies also a true exhibition of Christ. He must be set forth in his essential glory as the Son of God, and in his glory as Incarnate Mediator, Son of God and man. He must be set forth in his holy example and temptations, in his precious death and burial, in his glorious resurrection and ascension, in his present session at the right hand of the Father, and in his future advent to judge the world. All this must be done, that His people may learn to trust in him, and long for his appearing. The sacraments must also be expounded, for they are the seals of God to the truth of his word of grace, and to our participation in the benefits of Christ's passion. We must be exhorted moreover, to personal faith in this blessed Saviour, that we may have life through his name. And those good works, which are the fruits of faith, must also be pointed out. We must be addressed as husbands, fathers, masters, as children, and as servants; we must be taught our several duties, and warned of the snares

in our path. Our understandings must be informed, lest feeling take the place of judgment; our hearts must be dealt with, lest the intellect be informed without the affections being gained for God. And what makes this heavy and responsible task the heavier, is the scanty opportunity which, in the present state of the Church, is afforded to the pastor of efficiently fulfilling it. He is compelled to crowd this immense mass of matter, these appeals to his people's understandings, their consciences, their hearts, within the space of two, or at the most, of three pulpit-addresses weekly. These addresses too are of very moderate length. Short time indeed to instruct men for eternity! Since then it is so short, and since these opportunities of instruction are so few, let us see that we do not neglect them. Let us take heed how we sacrifice eternity and its everlasting interests to time and its fleeting concerns. If we do so, we shall repent it only once, but that will be FOR EVER.

To give point and energy to his injunction, St. Paul adds in the text, that it is only by enduring to the end that we are made partakers of Christ's salvation. He has already mentioned perseverance as the mark of Christ's family,¹ and now he mentions it again in connection with daily exhortation, because such exhortation has been appointed by God as the means of preserving his people faithful, and enabling them to persevere. There is no greater delusion than the idea that we are saved by one act of faith. The food of yesterday will not suffice for to-day, and neither will the faith of yesterday. The faith which saves, is a continued act. "By which also ye are saved," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you."² Let us not think then that we are independent of the ministered word, because we have been taught by the Spirit, and enabled to believe on Jesus. That word is ministered that we may continue to believe, that we may keep the Saviour in memory and so attain eternal life.

But we are taught another most important lesson by these words of St. Paul. That which must be held steadfast to

¹ Heb. iii. 6.

² I Cor. xv. 2.

the end, is "the beginning of our confidence." When we first discovered the awful reality of our ruined condition, we fled to Christ as the hope of the condemned, the Saviour of the lost: his mercy was then our only stay. But we must never have another stay; this beginning of confidence must be held fast to the end. We must not think that because we have served God long and faithfully, we are entitled to another ground of confidence. The Church teaches us both in the confession and in the Litany, to acknowledge ourselves to the end, to be miserable sinners, who look for mercy only through the blood of Christ. In that character we began to deal with God, and in the same character we must continue to deal with him; if we seek to assume another, he will refuse to deal with us. The ministry of the gospel then is not one word for the sinner, and another for the believer. It is the same word for both, the word of God's mercy in his dear Son, to draw to him the sinner's wandering heart, and to establish the believer's confidence to the end. May the living God be pleased to bless for the accomplishment of both these ends, the ministry of his gospel in this our day! The word of exhortation shall thus be twice blessed, blessed to him that receives, blessed equally to him that gives. And those now connected as pastor and people shall meet at last, in that place where there shall be no possibility of departing from him any more.

"There we shall see his face,
And never, never sin;
There from the rivers of his grace
Drink endless pleasures in."

May this be our experience in God's everlasting mercy!

LECTURE V.

Hebrews iii. 15—19.

"While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

IN the verses which we have just read, the Apostle, as was pointed out in the beginning of the last lecture, continues to dwell, for the instruction and warning of the Hebrews, on the history of their fathers in the desert, as referred to in the ninety-fifth Psalm. He repeats the exhortation of the Holy Ghost against the hard and unbelieving heart. To prevent the Hebrews from supposing that it was impossible for a people privileged as they had been, to disbelieve God, he next reminds them that their fathers, in the most favourable circumstances in which any people were ever placed, were guilty of this sin. And again, lest they should suppose that they were bound to God by ties of too endearing a character to make it possible for them to fall under his wrath, he reminds them that the sin of their fathers brake all bonds between God and them, forfeited his plighted mercy and brought down on them to their destruction, his terrible indignation. We shall consider these important statements in the first place, in their peculiar application to the Hebrews, and seek to draw from them in the second place, lessons of catholic truth.

While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. FOR WHO WERE THEY, THAT WHEN THEY HEARD, DID PROVOKE? WERE THEY NOT ALL INDEED THAT CAME OUT OF EGYPT BY MOSES?

St. Paul had just enjoined the Hebrews to exhort each other while it was called to-day, and reminded them that if they would be partakers of Christ, they must endure to the end. And he is so impressed with the urgent necessity of this warning, that he repeats it in the first verse of the text, beseeching them, while they were still invited to hear it, not to shut their ears against that voice which spake to them of the glories of redemption, and of the blessedness of the eternal rest in reserve for the people of God. But to this they might have answered, we have believed in the love of the Saviour and seen his glory, we have also exchanged the bondage of Judaism for the gentle yoke of the gospel; there is no fear therefore of any of us being so hardened as now to disbelieve and depart from him. Say not so, St. Paul replies, "for who were they that when they heard" the good report of the pleasant land from the mouth of Caleb and Joshua, provoked God by not believing it? "Were they not ALL indeed that came out of Egypt by Moses?" It is impossible to express in language the power of this thrilling question. It presents in rapid succession three considerations to the mind, and each of them is deeply fitted to arrest and solemnize it. God's word was disbelieved, and God himself distrusted by the very people whom he had led forth from Egypt. They had seen his miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea, they had been delivered by him from the oppressor's yoke, they had seen his glory in the wilderness, they had received from his hand the miraculous supply of all their wants, and yet they disbelieved him. They had never known his word to fail, they had never found him prove unfaithful, and yet when the hour of trial came, they cast that word back upon him, and refused to go forward, or to trust him any more. This were enough, but there is more behind. God was thus distrusted by a people who promised

well at the beginning; they "came out of Egypt," says the text. They submitted willingly to the guidance of Moses, they followed him through the Red Sea and through the wilderness, and though on several occasions they grieved the Spirit of the Lord, they never turned back till they came to the borders of their inheritance. But these promising beginnings ended then in open apostacy; "let us make us a captain," they said, "and let us return to Egypt."¹ And the worst is yet to come. God was thus distrusted not by a few black-hearted men in that vast congregation, but by **THEM ALL**. Among six hundred thousand footmen there was not one who believed him, "save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."² Oh then, ye Hebrews, says St. Paul, am I over-anxious when I warn you against the evil heart of unbelief? You have indeed enjoyed great privileges, and you have begun well. But your fathers also had great privileges, your fathers also began well. And if notwithstanding this they all disbelieved God, surely it is not over-fearfulness which suggests the danger of some among you being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

The apostle however has not yet done with his subject. He proceeds,—

AND with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

He had warned them just before of the effect of unbelief, that it leads to depart from God. And now he instances this in the case of their fathers. For unbelief led them into all manner of sin, into idolatry, lusting, murmuring, fornication; and they grieved the Lord by these sins for forty years. The Hebrews are also reminded that by these sins, and the unbelief from which they sprung, their fathers had brought down most signal vengeance on their heads. God had promised to bring them into the land of Canaan; but after

¹ Numbers xiv, 4.

² Numbers xxi. 66.

they disbelieved him, he swore that they should never see it, and that their carcases should fall in the wilderness. And it was so. They were shut out from that good land, and given over judicially to the dominion of their evil heart of unbelief. It led them into the sins which thus provoked the Lord, and brought about in time the accomplishment of the whole of his fearful word. See then in the sins of your fathers, ye Hebrews, says St. Paul, how unbelief leads away from God, how it will lead you away from him. And see in their punishment, that nothing will screen you, if unbelieving and disobedient, from his anger. You have his covenant in Christ and his promise of salvation; but these will not screen you. For your fathers also had his covenant, and he had promised to bring them into Canaan. But he set aside that covenant, he brake that promise; the very men who had left Egypt expecting to sit in that good land under their own vine and fig-tree, died and were buried in the sandy desert. And as he dealt with them, so will he deal with you: "be not high-minded, but fear."

The Apostle still proceeds,—

So we see that they could not enter in, because of unbelief.

These words contain a summary of the preceding argument, bringing before the Hebrews, at one glance, both the sin and the punishment of their fathers. Their sin is referred to, for it is expressly stated that unbelief prevented them from entering into the land of promise; and their punishment is referred to, for we are told that "they could not enter in." This remarkable expression traces also the necessary connection between their sin and the punishment which followed it. God could not, consistently with his character, lead an unbelieving people into the promised inheritance. And deprived through their unbelief, of the assistance of his almighty arm, they were not able, by any efforts of their own, to possess themselves of that good land. They attempted to do so, for even after the oath of exclusion, they armed themselves and "presumed to go up to the hill-

top." But "the ark of the covenant of the Lord and Moses," as we read in the sacred narrative, "departed not out of the camp." And the Amorites finding these unbelieving men separated from their protecting God, discomfited and chased them.¹ This reference to the history of their fathers must have been peculiarly arresting to Hebrew readers. They were aware too of its perfect truth. They knew that to these questions of St. Paul only one answer could be returned. They knew that it was not Ammonites, Moabites, or Egyptians, but their own privileged fathers who had thus provoked the Lord. They knew that the dreadful severity which excluded the objects of it from his rest, and doomed them to perish in the wilderness, was not used by God toward an alien people, but toward a people to whom he was bound by solemn covenant, the seed of Abraham his friend. And this taught them, if anything could teach them, not to trust in their own hearts or to rest on their spiritual privileges. It taught them also that unbelief and disobedience on their part would cancel all bonds between God and them, would justify him in failing to fulfil his most solemn promises, and glorify him in his most dreadful severity. Finally, it reminded them that without faith in God, and the aid of his almighty arm, they never should be able to overcome a persecuting world and opposing Devil, and to enter into his heavenly rest.

II. Let us now direct our attention to the lessons of catholic truth which may be learned from this precious subject. It teaches us what the voice of Jesus, which we are called to hear, is now declaring; warns us against that unbelief which is so fearfully common; and reminds us that the present is the time to listen. We shall observe this, if we look carefully into the text. Our hearing Christ, is compared to the Israelites hearing the good report which Caleb and Joshua brought of the promised land. For it was when they heard that report, that those who had come out of Egypt by Moses, and who till then had been partially obedient, were guilty of "the bitter provocation." The testimony of these servants of God then to their brethren

¹ Numbers xiv. 40—45.

of Israel, may be regarded as a typical shadowing forth of the testimony of Christ in the gospel. They spake of a good land, a land of milk and honey, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of brooks and streams of water; and to confirm their words, they brought in their hands a sample of its fruits.¹ And Christ, who has passed through the heavens and entered into the rest of God, brings to us in like manner, in his holy gospel, a report of the blessedness of this rest. He speaks to us from heaven of the covenant of God, of himself as its Mediator, of his precious blood of sprinkling, and of access through him to God the Judge of all. He speaks of the glory prepared for his believing people, even of Mount Zion the seat of his kingdom; of the heavenly Jerusalem the city of the living God, and of the innumerable company of ministering angels. He speaks also of the blessedness prepared, of fellowship with the spirits of the just made perfect, and with the general assembly and Church of the first-born.² And he bids us set our hearts on these things, the things which are above,³ and of which the consolations of his Spirit are now the gracious earnest.⁴ But let us hear his own account of the way in which his report of this good land is received. "They all with one consent," when they were invited to the royal supper, "began to make excuse." One spoke of his piece of ground, another of his yoke of oxen, and a third of his domestic engagements. For, while differing in their tastes, they agreed in esteeming these respective pursuits and occupations more than the company of their Prince.⁵ And the concerns and interests of time in like manner, appear to the thoughtless and unbelieving more worthy of attention than the promise of eternal life in the presence of the blessed God. They acknowledge in words that the blessings which the gospel sets before them are inconceivably great and glorious; but they regard them as unattainable. To expect assurance of God's mercy and the indwelling of his holy Spirit, and to be made partakers of that purity which shall prepare for his presence

¹ Numbers xiii. 21—27.² Hebrews xii. 22—25.³ Col. iii. 1.⁴ Ephesians i. 14.⁵ Luke xiv. 15—20.

hereafter, appears nothing better to them than an enthusiast's dream. Such was the spirit of Israel in the desert. They complained that the cities of Canaan were impregnable, and that the sons of Anak its inhabitants, were stronger than they.¹ God had promised to be with them, to smite down the Canaanites, and to put them in possession of the land. But they distrusted him on the one hand, and Canaan did not appear to them to be worthy of such an effort on the other. "They despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word."² The sin of gospel-hearers then who listen not to Christ is exactly analogous to theirs. And such listless unbelief is above all other sins, and as the root of all other sins, their "bitter provocation" of the Saviour. The text therefore warns us against it, and reminds us that the present is the time to listen to him. We have been told this already, but now St. Paul repeats it, beseeching us that while the admonition of the Holy Ghost to hear Christ's voice to-day, is yet sounding in our ears, we be not found disobedient. For Christ is speaking, and the Holy Ghost is admonishing us to hear him, to-day. Time is our *to-day*, eternity is *to-morrow*. And while to-day lasts, and we can say he speaks, and the Holy Ghost admonishes, it is our part to hear and to obey. We shall soon enter the world of spirits, and it shall then avail us nothing to say, he spake, he admonished yesterday. I believe that the case of the Israelites is adduced to impress this truth on the mind. They repented bitterly of their evil behaviour, when it was too late; God had sworn against them, and would not repent.³ And so shall it be with multitudes hereafter. They shall wish that they had heard Christ, when he has ceased to speak, and it is for ever too late to hear him.

We learn also from this subject that no abiding goodness is to be expected from the heart of man, even in the most favourable circumstances and after the most promising beginnings. For the history of Israel in the desert is left on record in holy Scripture as a faithful exhibition of human nature from age to age. The men who provoked God on the

¹ Numbers xiii. 28, 29, 31—33.

² Psalm cvi. 24.

³ Deut. i. 45.

borders of the land of Canaan, had not heard of his miracles by tradition, or even from their fathers, but were the very men who came out of Egypt by Moses. Let us consider for a moment what these men had heard and seen! Moses had come to them fresh from the awful vision of the burning bush, and had told them of the merciful remembrance of Abraham's God. He had gone in before their eyes, to the Egyptian tyrant on their behalf; and when Pharaoh refused to hear, he had stretched forth his rod to smite him. And their eyes had beheld, as the immediate, dreadful consequence, the waters of Egypt turned into blood, her idol-river pregnant with loathsome frogs, her dust with lice, her air with swarms of flies. They had seen her cattle destroyed by pestilence; they had seen her harvest consumed; they had seen the hail and fire which ran along the ground, and the armies of locusts which came at God's command, to consume it. They had witnessed the supernatural darkness which brooded for three days, over the land of their oppressors. And last, but most impressive of all, they had heard the agonizing cry of a smitten people on that never-to-be-forgotten night on which God smote the first-born, and when there was not a house in which there was not one dead. And all this to them was but the beginning of marvels. These were the very men who went harnessed out of the land of Egypt, who saw the waters of the sea roll back, and marched through the flood on foot behind the Almighty as their guide; the very men who drank from the smitten rock, whose hands gathered the manna, whose tongue tasted, whose bodies were nourished by that angels' food. Yea, these were the men in whose presence God descended on Mount Sinai, who heard the dreadful trumpet, who saw the mountain quaking, and God's glory on the top of it, like devouring fire. And out of that fire they heard the voice of the Almighty in accents so terrible that its utterance seemed death; and yet mercy was mingled with the terror, for it avouched them to be his people, and declared him to be their God.¹ Such had been their wonderful experience. And oh, how promising their

¹ Exodus xix.; xx.; xxiv. 17.

beginning was! When they first heard from the mouth of Moses "that the Lord had looked on their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped."¹ It surely shewed some confidence in God to forsake Egypt at the utterance of his word, and to descend at his command, into the slimy bottom of the deep. It surely shewed some gratitude, when they sung his praise on the banks of the Red Sea; and some purpose of cleaving to him, when they declared at Sinai, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."² But the most affecting part of their history, was their conduct in the matter of the tabernacle. God asked them to bring an offering for the construction of his sanctuary. "And they came, both men and women,...and brought bracelets, and ear-rings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold." As many as possessed blue, or purple, or scarlet, or fine linen, or goat's hair, or ram's skins, or badger's skins, or shittim wood, brought them with willingness of heart. The women too spun with their hands and brought what they had spun. And the rulers brought onyx-stones, spices and oil. Yea, they continued to bring, till Moses restrained their zeal. Nor was this all. They wrought diligently in the construction of the tabernacle under the direction of Moses; so that when he looked on it, he found it done and finished just "as the Lord had commanded." "And Moses BLESSED THEM."³ It is almost impossible to read this account and refrain from tears. Which of us, if we had seen these zealous-hearted Israelites giving their substance for God's service, and labouring with their hands in his work, could have foreseen the direful ending of so promising a beginning, even the bitter provocation and the mouldering of their bones in the desert? But so it was. What seemed like gratitude, confidence, obedience, was but excited by circumstances, and soon passed away. And we are thus taught in the most emphatic manner, to expect no abiding fruit of righteousness from fallen man. In many cases there is not even an apparent return. We see the privileges of

¹ Exodus iv. 31.² Exodus xix. 8.³ Exodus xxxv. 20-29;

xxxvi. 5-7; xxxix. 48.

pious parents, of early instruction in his word, and of continual pastoral admonition bestowed by God on multitudes, and bestowed in vain. And we see many to whom these privileges for a time seemed blessed, many who, as far as the eye of man could discern, turned with purpose of heart to the Lord, wander from his ways even after apparent perseverance in them, and fall miserably in the paths of the destroyer. Both these things are causes of bitter lamentation, but neither of them are matters of surprise. He who does not lament over them, is destitute of the mind of Christ; he who wonders at them, has yet to learn both the true character of the heart of man and the lessons of the word of God.

We learn from this subject finally, that the unbelief and disobedience of the creature, cancels all bonds and forfeits every promise. Let us mark the catastrophe of this people's history; they were excluded from the land of promise, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness. This catastrophe is indeed to be remarked; for God was pledged to them by bonds which it seemed impossible to break. A father who has power over his own substance, has executed a deed, constituting his son his heir. And the ungrateful son says, I may behave as I please toward my parent, he cannot recall his act. Israel peradventure had something of this feeling when provoking the Lord to anger. They had received so many assurances of his mercy, so many promises of being led into his inheritance, that peradventure their ungrateful hearts whispered, We may sin as we please, JEHOVAH cannot go back. He said to Moses at the bush, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt...and I am come down to deliver them...and to bring them unto a good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey." He said to him in Egypt, "go and gather the elders of Israel together and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob appeared unto me, saying,...I will bring you...unto the land of the Canaanites...a land flowing with milk and honey."¹

¹ Exodus iii. 7, 8, 16, 17.

And again he said unto him, "say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord...I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I WILL GIVE IT YOU FOR AN HERITAGE—I THE LORD."¹ Such had been the language, and such the promises of the God of truth; and stronger language or more stringent promises it is impossible to conceive. We are inclined to ask how he could, consistently with his faithfulness, leave them unperformed. Let us hear himself on the matter. "Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein;...your carcases shall fall in this wilderness...and ye shall know MY BREACH OF PROMISE."² These last most remarkable words shew plainly that God expected Israel to accuse him of a breach of promise. Accuse me then, is his answer; I do not deny my promise, I do not deny my oath; but neither promise nor oath is binding, neither promise nor oath shall be fulfilled to the perverse and unbelieving. Israel took up his challenge, and audaciously charged him with having broken his word. When Dathan and Abiram were gathered against Moses, they said, (but their words were against the Lord,) "Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up." But "he that reproveth God, let him answer it;" the Almighty deigned no explanation, the earth vindicated its Creator's honour by opening her mouth and swallowing them.³ When man threatens not to perform his word, it is often done under the impulse of anger, and he relents in consequence, when his anger is abated. But the "living and eternal God" is "without passions,"⁴ and therefore it is not so with him. He gave fearful proof of this in the wilderness. Israel, after the bitter provocation, appealed to that goodness which had so often forgiven them, but they appealed in vain.⁵ They hoped perhaps that before forty years should pass, his kindness would relent in their

¹ Exodus vi. 6—8. ² Numbers xiv. 30—34. ³ Numbers xvi. 14, 31—33.

⁴ Article i.

⁵ Deut. i. 45.

favour. If they hoped so, they were again mistaken ; it did not relent. When Moses and Eleazar the priest numbered the children of Israel at the end of the forty years, in the plains of Moab, there was not left a man of those who were numbered at the beginning of them, in the wilderness of Sinai, "save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."¹

The last verse of the text explains more fully this principle of the Divine government. It is impossible, it tells us, that God's promises should be fulfilled to the unbelieving ; it cannot be. If it were possible, these promises would be an encouragement to iniquity, an incitement to sin. And there is nothing of which God is more jealous than this. When he commanded Moses to appoint cities of refuge for the unintentional manslayer, he said of the deliberate and intentional murderer, "thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die."² And this principle is apparent in all the Divine word. The horns of the altar were esteemed the last security, but even they, by this enactment, were not to shelter guilt. And it is so with every declaration of his mercy, with every promise of his grace ; they shall afford no shelter for persevering unbelief. There is nothing in God of which sin may lay hold. His goodness shakes it off, his faithfulness disowns its claim ; "depart from me," says the good and faithful One, "ye that work iniquity."³

It is moreover, a righteous thing with God to deal with men according as they deal with him. And therefore Scripture tells us that he is pure to the pure, and froward to the froward.⁴ It is the righteous reward of faith to find him true, and the righteous punishment of unbelief to find its suspicions verified, to find him untrue. This is indeed strong language, but not stronger than his own word. He gave fearful demonstration of it in those dealings with Israel which we are now considering. They said that he had brought them out of Egypt, to deliver them into the hand of the Amorites, to slay them. "As truly as I live," was

¹ Numbers xxvi. 63—65.² Exodus xxi. 14.³ Matthew vii. 23.⁴ Psalm xviii. 26.

his tremendous answer, "as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you : your carcases shall fall in this wilderness."¹ They said that it was so, and God said, let it be so. And his sentence on unbelief is still the same. It treats his message of love and mercy as a falsehood, and considers his purpose of salvation as a nullity. Let them prove then a falsehood and a nullity, is the answer of the Lord. But to those who confide in him, his language is the very opposite. You have believed in my love and mercy, he says, and hoped in my salvation. "According to your faith be it unto you;" that love and mercy shall be your eternal stay, and you shall be satisfied for ever with the riches of that salvation.

Let these three lessons sink into our hearts. Let us be impressed with the necessity of hearkening to-day to the voice of Jesus. Let us not trust in our own hearts, or conclude that all is necessarily well with us, because we have begun, it may be with sincerity, to attend to the concerns of eternity. We see how Israel fell back; remembering then that but for the grace of God, their case will be ours to-morrow, let us not "be high-minded, but fear." And let us take heed of the fatal error, that though we be unbelieving and forgetful of God, the blood of Christ and the covenant of God, and the relation to him into which that covenant has brought us, shall shelter us in the day of his anger. It shall not be so, as the history of Israel is a witness to us. God will cut all bonds that bind him to the creature, save those of faith and love. Let these then be the bonds by which we are bound to him. For if it is so, then, oh transporting thought, he shall be ours and we shall be his, FOR EVER. Which may he grant of his infinite mercy!

¹ Numbers xiv. 28, 29.

LECTURE VI.

Hebrews iv. 1, 2.

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you shall seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

WE have been occupied, in the last three lectures, with the consideration of the eventful history of Israel in the desert, as it is referred to by the Holy Ghost in the mouth of David, and commented on by St. Paul. The Apostle however has not yet done with his subject; it furnishes him with considerations of which he makes most efficient use to the close of this part of the epistle. Our privileges, he tells the Hebrews in the words which have just been read, are as great as were the privileges of our fathers; we have heard the glad tidings of Christ's rest even as they did, and a promise of entering into it has been made to us, even as it was to them. Let us therefore beware of their sin; the word which they heard, was not mixed with faith. And let us also beware of their punishment; that word in consequence, "did not profit them," they came short of the rest of God. These three all-important truths have already been brought before us and largely dwelt upon. But God's word is so varied and abundant both in instruction and illustration, that in faithfully following and carefully expounding it, there is no risk of repetition. We shall therefore enter on the consideration of these natural divisions of the text, inquiring into the application of the truths contained in them, at once to the Hebrews and to ourselves.

I. St. Paul declares expressly that Christ has left to us a promise of entering into his rest, and that "the gospel" (or glad tidings of this rest) HAS BEEN "PREACHED TO US" as truly as to the generation of the wilderness. What was preached to that generation was not merely entrance into the land of Canaan. This promise flowed out of something else, viz. the covenant of God. And this covenant was preached to them by word, by sacrament, and by type. By word: "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God," and "I will bring you into the land."¹ By sacrament: in the passover God avouched them to be his redeemed people, and they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."² By type: the passover, the smitten rock, and the manna were all foreshewings of the Saviour, and taught them to look forward to his coming. And the rest which was promised to them in Canaan was intimately connected with this covenant. It was to consist not in that land's fertility and abundance, but in God's presence with them there as "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation."³ According as he himself declared to Moses, "MY PRESENCE shall go with thee, and I will give thee REST."⁴ Such was the gospel which was preached to that generation. And the same gospel is preached to us in much greater fulness, both by word and sacrament; reality also has now taken the place of type. It is preached to us in word; we are told that "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."⁵ We are also told that through this Saviour there "is preached to us the forgiveness of sins."⁶ And God proclaims to us, "I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."⁷ These blessed truths are also sealed in both the sacraments. Baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, declares on the part of God that he waits to receive us as a father, to take us as children, and to bless us with his heavenly grace. And it is given to us in the Lord's Supper to eat of that

¹ Exod. vi. 7, 8. ² 1 Cor. x. 2. ³ Exod. xix. 6. ⁴ Exod. xxxiii. 14.

⁵ 1 John iv. 10.

⁶ Acts xiii. 38.

⁷ II Cor. vi. 17, 18.

body which was broken for us, to drink of that blood which was shed to take away our sins. We have thus the reality of the manna, for the body of Jesus is the true manna, "the bread of God which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."¹ We have also the reality of the passover, in Jesus slain to save us from the wrath to come. And we have the reality of the smitten rock, in Jesus smitten unto death that we might drink of the full river of everlasting consolation. The promise too of entering into his rest is declared to us both by word and sacrament. It is declared by word, we are told that "this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life."² And of this promise the cup in the holy Supper is the sacramental confirmation. Jesus while giving it, spake of that day when he should drink it new with us in his Father's kingdom.³ And it therefore remains in the Church, the pledge to her members that they shall one day feast with their Lord.

But there is one point among those now referred to, which demands fuller elucidation, that we may see the perfect identity of our circumstances with those of the generation of the wilderness. The Apostle speaks of Christ's rest, and says that a promise is left to us of entering into it. Rest signifies release from care, vexation, grief and change. Into this rest Christ entered when he ascended to the right hand of God, leaving all his sorrows, cares and temptations behind him. And he has left to us now tossed with trouble, care and grief, the precious legacy of the promise of the text, the promise of entering after him into this rest, a rest which neither accident shall interrupt nor malice disturb for ever. Does St. Paul mean then that we shall go and abide for ever with the Saviour at the right hand of God? No; Christ himself says that he has gone there to prepare a place for us, and that he WILL COME AGAIN and receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also.⁴ To what place then shall he come again? To the place from which he ascended, the place in which he was abiding when he uttered the promise, THIS WORLD, when it is brought out of the cleansing

¹ John vi. 33.² I John ii. 25.³ Matt. xxvi. 29.⁴ John xiv. 2, 3.

fire and prepared as his holy kingdom. It shall then be his rest for ever, and where he is, there shall we his people be. This blessed truth has been already brought before us. Let us remember St. Paul's declaration that the world to come shall be the seat of Christ's glorious kingdom, and that the thrones of his saints shall be planted beside his throne. And Scripture in other places is even more particular; it mentions the very locality of this blessed rest. CANAAN IS THAT LOCALITY. "And in that day," says the prophet, "there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and HIS REST shall be glorious."¹ This root of Jesse is Jesus, the son and Lord of David. And when the nations seek to him as their Lord and King, they shall repair to Canaan to pay their adoring homage.² He shall appear in that land in which he was crowned with thorns, wearing the diadem of eternal dominion. And the excellent glory of the Shekinah, the manifestation of his Divine majesty shall turn into darkness all created light. This is no enthusiast's dream but the sure word of God. "The moon shall be confounded," Isaiah tells us, "and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously."³ These ancients are the same, I doubt not, with the crowned elders of the Book of Revelation.⁴ The word is the same in the original, and is a term of honour applied by God to such men as Abraham, Moses, Samuel and the other venerable fathers of his Church. Two of that illustrious company appeared in glory with Jesus when he was transfigured on the Mount.⁵ And they shall behold his glory and be glorified along with him, in the day when he shall reign on Mount Zion. But the promise of reigning with Christ in Canaan, belongs to all the just; "I will give unto thee," said God to Abraham, "and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."⁶ And "they which are of faith," i. e. Christ's believing

¹ Isaiah xl. 10.² Zechariah xiv. 9, 16.³ Isaiah xxiv. 23.⁴ Rev. iv. 4.⁵ Luke ix. 28-31.⁶ Gen. xvii. 8.

people are, according to St. Paul, the seed which is here intended.¹ He says also expressly in another place, "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."² Christ's believing people then shall inherit Canaan in the coming day of glory, and reign with their Lord in that truly holy land. This is the promise to which St. Paul in the text, has reference, which our Redeemer left to us as his precious legacy, when he ascended up on high. St. Paul's language in another part of the epistle proves this interpretation to be just. "Ye are come," he tells the Hebrews, "unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."³ He does not mean that they were then in Mount Zion, but that they had the promise of coming to it when Jesus should come, and when the holy Jerusalem, his saved people, should descend out of heaven in his company.⁴ For this, I repeat, was the promise which was left to them, and is also left to us, of entering into the rest of the Redeemer. We see therefore the exact identity of our circumstances with those of the generation of the wilderness. They had the covenant of God's love and mercy declared to them by word, confirmed by sacramental pledge, and illustrated by type and figure. They had also the promise of their covenant-God to lead them into Canaan, and to grant to them there the rest of his sacred presence. We have the same covenant of love and mercy declared in words of much larger grace, and confirmed by sacramental pledge. We have also the promise of being led into Canaan, and of resting with Christ there in the day of glory. We have indeed nothing to do with Canaan in the world that now is. But the difference in this respect, between our prospects and those of Israel, does not destroy the Apostle's parallel. For their rest in Canaan during this mortal life, would have been an earnest and foretaste of rest in it for ever.

II. St. Paul bids us beware of the sin of Israel; "the word preached" was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it." The expression in the original is the word of

¹ Gal. iii. 7.² Gal. iii. 29.³ Heb. xii. 22.⁴ Rev. xxi. 1—3.

hearing, and St. Paul's intention seems to be to contrast hearing with believing; they heard, he says, but they believed not. For though it is impossible to believe without having first heard, it is quite possible to hear without believing. The history of Israel in the desert is a melancholy proof of this. They heard from God's own mouth and from the mouth of Moses, of God's covenant, of his mercy, and of his promise of the land; they heard of that land's fertility and abundance from the mouth of Caleb and Joshua: but they believed nothing of what they heard. For though for a time they professed to believe it, their discouragement and murmuring on the occurrence of the least difficulty, and their final apostacy on the borders of the land, proved that profession insincere. St. Paul has dwelt on this exhibition of their character in the former chapter, and introduces his present caution to us with his usual emphatic "therefore;" intimating by this expression that we, having by nature the same hearts, are liable to fall into the same sin. And the caution is not a needless one, as we have mournful proof in the experience of every day. We who dwell in this Christian land, are privileged to hear the gospel, to hear of the love of God who gave his Son to redeem us from our lost estate, to hear of the forgiveness of sin, to hear of the promise which is left us of entering into Christ's rest. But of the unnumbered thousands who hear these things continually, how very few believe them! How many are there, alas, who from year to year, and throughout the countless Sabbaths of a long life, frequent the sanctuary of God where they are faithfully declared, and yet live and die without laying one of them to heart! He who supposes that he can never prove thus unthankful to God, and thus forgetful of his best interests, has yet to learn to know himself. "He that trusteth in his own heart," Scripture tells us, "is a fool."¹ And again it tells us that "happy is the man that feareth alway."² If this happiness is ours, we shall welcome the caution of the text.

¹ Proverbs xxviii. 26.

² Proverbs xxviii. 14.

III. St. Paul bids us beware of the punishment of Israel's sin; "the word preached did not profit them." Thus they came short of the rest, and thus we may come short of it, says the Apostle; "let us therefore fear." It is most striking to observe again the marked connection between unbelief and its punishment. The word which they heard did not profit these Israelites, because it was not "mixed with faith." Faith has been well termed *the gastric juice* of the soul. For as our food, through mixture with that juice, is turned into nourishment, so the word of God received by faith is made conducive to our spiritual nourishment. We grow, as we continue to receive and believe it, in love, obedience, holy boldness and determination in the service of God. Had Israel in the desert believed the word which they heard, it would thus have profited them. But they did not believe it, and as the natural consequence of unbelief, they were not profited. Their hearts remained estranged from God, they could not learn obedience, and instead of boldly meeting and triumphing over difficulties, they were appalled at the prospect of them and turned back. And as another natural consequence of unbelief, the word did not profit them so far as God was concerned. His having said that they should enter Canaan, availed nothing in the end; he could not lead into his inheritance an unbelieving and disobedient people. And essaying to enter it without his aid, they were at once discomfited. The Psalmist tells us, alluding to this discomfiture, that "the children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." And then he accounts for it by adding, "they kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law:"¹ for God could not aid a people to whom such a character belonged. Such was the punishment of Israel's unbelief, and such also shall be the punishment of ours; the word preached shall not profit us. Our hearts will remain estranged from God and destitute therefore of the only principle of obedience, and we shall not be able to overcome the difficulties which lie in the way to the kingdom of God. We are not indeed in the

¹ Psalm lxxviii, 9, 10.

circumstances of those to whom this epistle was addressed. They were exposed to persecution, reproach, and all manner of affliction and suffering, as a trial of their fidelity to the Lord. And they must therefore have known experimentally that without the strength which faith inspires, they were not able to advance a single step. But let no one suppose that because this is not our case, the path which leads to God's kingdom has now no difficulties, no stumbling-blocks left in it. The canon of Jesus is unalterable, "whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."¹ And it is no easy matter so to do. It is no easy matter to overcome the world when it smiles and seeks to seduce us from God; and when it frowns, to remain indifferent and pursue steadily the onward path of obedience. And the heart by nature is so entangled with things seen and sensible, that if we are merely seeking to lead a religious life and have a few languid desires after heaven, without that religion being based on faith, we shall find it impossible to proceed. We shall turn back as Israel did, and for the same reason. God allowed sinful cowardice in their case, to be the punishment of sinful unbelief; and so it is still. And as this unbelief and cowardice together shut them out of the promised inheritance, so shall it be with us: it is as impossible now as it was in their day, for God to lead into his rest an unbelieving and disobedient people. A promise of entering into it has indeed been left to us, but God's promises have neither being nor reality *except to faith*: unbelief turns the living word into a dead and useless letter. Let us therefore take heed of Israel's punishment, by taking heed of Israel's sin. St. Paul's two counsels are in reality one. The sin and punishment are so linked together that where the one is, the other will always be found.

This subject both in itself and from its connection with the teaching which has preceded it, is full of most important instruction. St. Paul exhorts to fear; "let us therefore fear," is his language. Many persons greatly misunderstand this and similar apostolic cautions. Over-confidence in

¹ Mark viii. 34.

religion is not a good thing, they say; fear is a most wholesome state. But what do they mean by over-confidence? They mean assured faith in God's love, in Christ's propitiation, in the taking away of our sins thereby, in the promise of eternal life; they mean in short, "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father."¹ And the fear which they recommend is a state of continual doubt, hesitation, and uncertainty concerning the mind of God and the reality of his everlasting promises. But this is not the fear which St. Paul recommends in the text. This fear is distrust of God; the fear recommended by the Apostle is distrust of ourselves. In some of the older versions of the Scripture this appears in a very striking way. They read, "let us fear therefore lest any of us forsaking the promise of entering into his rest, should seem to come behind."² There is no fear of the promise proving untrue, the fear is lest we forsake it. Nothing can be more different than these two fears. We read in the gospel-narrative, that an afflicted father brought to Jesus on one occasion, a devil-possessed child. Having told his piteous tale, he appealed to the Lord's compassion, but the language in which he did so, plainly shewed that he doubted his power. It was, "IF THOU CANST DO ANYTHING, have compassion on us, and help us." Christ's dignified reply is most remarkable. "IF THOU CANST BELIEVE, all things are possible to him that believeth."³ There is no question about my ability to help thee, was his meaning, no need to put an *if* there; the only question is, Canst thou trust me? If thou canst, all is well. And the case is still the same; there are still no *ifs* with God, the *if* is with ourselves. His love, his mercy, his promises may be safely relied on; and if we rely on them, there is no fear of their deceiving us. The only question is whether we will rely on them; the only fear is that we will forsake them to our eternal loss.

To all this many reply that it comes to the same thing in the end. We have been told, they say, that our hearts are disposed to forsake God, and have been exhorted to distrust ourselves; we have also been warned that if we forsake him,

¹ Rom. viii. 16. ² Tyndale, Cranmer, Geneva, Rheims. ³ Mark ix. 22, 23.

we shall come short of his eternal rest. There can be no confidence of ultimate salvation then; for there can be no assured hope of perseverance to the end. Let us not say so. Those counsels and warnings of St. Paul, to which our attention has been of late and is now directed, set forth merely the natural tendencies of the human heart, and the inevitable results of these tendencies. But God forbid that this should affect in the least the blessed truth, to which our attention was also of late directed, that in the heart in which the Holy Ghost is dwelling, these tendencies will be counteracted, and these deadly results prevented. The same Apostle whose counsels and warnings we are now considering, declares to the Corinthians that Christ shall confirm them to the end, adding "God is faithful, by whom ye were called."¹ He also writes to the Philippians, "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."² His confidence, let us observe, in the perseverance of these believers, was founded on another confidence, a confidence not in them but in Christ. Let us look then to the same Saviour; and we need not fear that in doing so, we shall be unable to persevere to the end. If he has communicated to us his holy Spirit, he may well be trusted to maintain that life which he has inspired, against every hostile influence; if he has builded us into his spiritual house, he will surely preserve from destruction the work of his own hands.

But it may be objected that St. Paul in the text is addressing persons whom he knew to be believers on Christ, and to have received the Holy Ghost, and that even to them he writes "let us therefore fear." And surely then, it may be argued, we never can attain to any confident persuasion that we shall inherit eternal life. This objection is founded on misapprehension of the nature of the Apostolic epistles. Men imagine that these epistles were written to persons of whose gracious state the writers were assured, nay that on the ground of this Apostolic assurance respecting them, these persons had been received into the Church. And

¹ I Corinthians i. 7—9.

² Philippians i. 6.

when they take up the epistles under this impression of them, and find the Apostles addressing the members of the different churches as if their salvation were an uncertainty, it is no cause of surprise that they are led to form false conceptions of what really was Apostolic doctrine. But this is entire misapprehension. The Apostles had no infallible assurance of the gracious condition of those to whom they wrote. If these venerable guides of the church had any principle of action more clear and distinct than another, it was that of throwing the responsibility of men's spiritual state entirely on themselves. They received them on their profession, and when they saw what appeared to their judgment evident tokens of a work of grace in their hearts, they unfeignedly rejoiced; but they gave to no man their assurance that he was "an Israelite indeed." These things duly considered, plainly shew who the persons were to whom the warning of the text was addressed. It was addressed to a company of persons who professed faith in the Lord; most of them, we should say, truly, but perhaps not all. Let us mark then the consummate wisdom of the warning. By dwelling on the unbelief of the human heart, and its certain and dreadful catastrophe, the Apostle taught the really faithful among those to whom he wrote, to exercise a holy circumspection, and to look every instant to their Saviour. Whilst those on the other hand who were trusting in their privileges, might, through being thus addressed, be awakened by God's grace from their lethargy, and made living members of Christ. But there is nothing in this or similar warnings which contradicts for a moment either the blessed truth, that God's promises of eternal mercy may be safely depended on, or the kindred apostolic doctrine that those who indeed depend on them shall inherit eternal life.

Let us clearly understand then the perfect consistency of the doctrine of St. Paul. He has set before the Hebrews as certain and eternal verities, the love of God, the proclaimed remission of sin, and the promise of eternal life which was given to them in Christ Jesus. He has declared many times, and declares now once more, that he who had ascended to

the right hand of the Father, had left to them a promise of entering into his rest. And yet he says, "let us therefore fear." Because he could not tell who among them had embraced that promise. What he wrote for them, he wrote for us also; may we profit by his words! May those among us who have believed in the Lord, be taught, in the glass of Israel's history, to see the treachery of our hearts, that we may distrust these hearts more than ever, and learn that our strength to persevere is in Christ, and in him alone! And may those among us who have hitherto supposed that our hearts were very good, and that having been baptized and received into the church, we were of course meet for the kingdom of God, be awakened ere it be too late for ever, from this most fatal dream; God giving us to see, in the glass of Israel's sin and Israel's catastrophe, what our hearts really are, and what our doom shall be! For "all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."¹

¹ I Corinthians x. 11.

LECTURE VII.

Hebrews iv. 3—10.

“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus (i. e. Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”

I HAVE taken all these verses at once, because they form one subject and their contents cannot well be divided. In going through them, I shall not dwell minutely on any one, but endeavour to exhibit the contents of the whole. The passage, as far as construction is concerned, is one of the most difficult in the New Testament, but when its meaning is discerned, it is one of the most precious.

Let me begin by pointing out its connection with the immediately-preceding context. St. Paul has just been warning us to take heed lest, through unbelief, we come short of the rest of God. And now, to stir us up to faith, he proceeds in the first verse of the text, to remind us that it has the

assurance of entrance into this rest; and to prove his words, he also reminds us that nothing but Israel's want of faith made God to swear to their exclusion. The Apostle after this, proceeds to demonstrate the nature of the rest of which he has been speaking; to shew that it is not the rest of creation, which is past, nor the inheritance of Canaan into which Joshua introduced Israel, which is also past, but a rest which is yet future, viz. the rest of Christ the Redeemer. This, I say, is evidently his object, but the construction of the passage, sentence by sentence, is notwithstanding this, a very difficult task. * The versions of Tyndale and Cranmer throw great light on its meaning. In them the first verse of the text reads thus,—

But we which have believed, do enter into his rest, as contrariwise he said to the other, I have sworn in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest: AND THAT SPAKE HE VERILY LONG AFTER THAT THE WORKS WERE MADE, AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD LAID.

The rest, St. Paul would say, of which in this ninety-fifth Psalm the Holy Ghost is speaking, and which I have been setting before you so earnestly, urging you to seek to enter into it, is manifestly not the rest of creation; for that inspired song was uttered by the mouth of David long after the work of creation was perfected by its Almighty Author. We read, St. Paul then continues, in the book of Genesis, of the rest of creation, and in the Psalm which we are now considering we read of the rest from which unbelief excludes. But the one rest is spoken of as past, for we are told that "God DID REST on the seventh day;" while the other is spoken of as future, "if they SHALL ENTER into my rest," being the language of God's threatening against Israel. These two rests then, the Apostle argues, cannot possibly be the same. Into this rest, which Israel forfeited by unbelief, some, he goes on to reason, must be found to enter; and since the love of God has so determined, the Holy Ghost again makes offer of it in the mouth of David, saying, "To-day, if ye will hear his

voice, harden not your hearts." But to this the Hebrews might have answered, Our fathers were brought into this rest, when Joshua led them into Canaan. No, says St. Paul. If Joshua had given rest to your fathers, the Holy Ghost would not, in the days of David, "after so long a time," even five hundred years of possession, "have spoken of another day." The rest therefore of which he speaks, still waits to be revealed; it "remaineth" to "the people of God." It is the glorious rest of Christ the Redeemer, who having finished his labours for the redemption of mankind, now rests from his work as the Creator did from his. Of this rest "we which have believed" have even now the foretaste; and when Jesus shall appear, we shall be blest with its everlasting fruition.

I have no doubt that this is the true interpretation of this very difficult passage. We Gentiles may think the argument contained in it very needless, but the Hebrews must have needed it; for there is no trifling in the reasonings of inspiration. With the Old Testament-scriptures as their only guide, they might have said to the Apostle, you bid us beware lest by unbelief we come short of the rest of God; what is the meaning of this language? We read of the rest of Creation, and we read of the rest of Canaan into which Joshua brought our fathers, and in which we now are. God nowhere speaks of another rest than these: to what rest then do you allude? To this St. Paul answers, God does speak of another rest. The rest of the ninety-fifth Psalm cannot possibly be the rest of Creation, neither can it be the rest of Canaan. That good land indeed, through the sin of our nation, has never been worthy of this sacred appellation, it has never proved God's rest. But his promise cannot fail, and the day therefore is at hand when he shall rest in it for ever. For "the Redeemer shall come to Zion,"¹ and Abraham's spiritual children, the true Israel, shall be gathered round him; they shall be his "kingdom of priests," and his "holy nation,"² dwelling with him as his people, and having him in the midst of them, as their God. This is the glorious rest to which the Holy

¹ Isaiah lix. 20.² Exodus xix. 6.

Ghost, speaking by the mouth of David, directed the hopes of your fathers, and which I, in this gospel-day, press on the attention of their children.

This precious Scripture proves incontestably the truth of the declaration of our Church, that "they are not to be heard which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises."¹ For the whole argument of St. Paul before us, goes to prove that believers in the days of David, were directed by the Holy Ghost to look forward to the rest which yet "remaineth to the people of God." It was offered indeed even in this world to the generation of the wilderness; for the presence of their covenant-God with them in the land of Canaan, would have been at once a foreshewing, an earnest and a foretaste of the blessedness of the rest of glory. But their perverse unbelief prevented the accomplishment of this gracious counsel of God. And their children, in the successive generations of their history, trod in their fathers' steps, so that God was never able to find his rest in the midst of them. He found *a rest in this world* before sin entered it, even the rest of the seventh day. And he shall find *a rest in it again* when sin is driven out of it, even in the day of glory. Meanwhile, till God introduce that blessed era, the Redeemer *is resting in heaven*, at the right hand of his Father.

Having thus settled the meaning of the text, let us now seek to warm our hearts and to lift our affections to the things unseen and eternal, by dwelling in the first place, somewhat at length, on this blessed rest of the Redeemer; and by considering in the second place, how it is that through faith we partake in it.

I. This rest of Christ is both present and future. He is even now, as the last verse of the text declares, "entered into his rest," for "he hath ceased from his own works as God did from his." The works from which Christ has thus ceased are well called "his own works." They are the works peculiar to him as Redeemer; his toils, labours and sufferings in achieving redemption, and in founding and constituting

¹ Article vii.

the Church. He has ceased from his sufferings; he has no more wrath to endure, no more desertion on the part of his Father to complain of; sin is now expiated and transgression made an end of. He has ceased from his toils; he has no more a tempting devil to wrestle with and overcome, nor an alluring world to resist, nor surrounding sin to strive against;* these our enemies are for ever vanquished. Both the tempter and his temptations are excluded from that holy place in which Jesus has now his abode: he was troubled once, but his rest now is perfect, and trouble can approach him no more. He rests also from his labours. During his earthly pilgrimage these labours were unceasing. He laboured in preaching the gospel, now in the temple, now on the mountain-top, now in the wilderness, now on the sea-shore, now from the ship. He began these labours with early dawn, and continued at them long after the sun had set,¹ passing from them even then to nightly vigils and sleepless hours of prayer.² Nor did he preach the gospel in word only, he "went about *doing good*."³ He visited every city and village within the bounds of Judea and Galilee,⁴ giving eyes to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and power of speech to the dumb; causing the lame to leap as an hart; restoring vigour to the palsied; cleansing the lepers; casting out the devil, and bursting the bands of death. He laboured also in instructing the ignorance of his apostles, in fitting the fishermen of Galilee to be the guides of his Church and the instructors of mankind. And it was not till he had fitted them for this work, till he had left in charge with them the precious treasure of his gospel, till he had secured the Holy Ghost to teach, to guide, to counsel them, that he rested from his labours. But these labours are over; he rests now. And where does he rest? Men speak of the grave as the place

¹ Luke xxi. 38; Mark i. 32, 33.

² Luke vi. 12; Mark i. 35.

³ Acts x. 38.

⁴ Luke viii. 1.

* I use the word "surrounding" in contrast to indwelling. Our Lord "resisted unto blood, striving against sin," (see Part III. Lecture I.) and we his people are called to follow him in the strife. But the enemy which was in his case, without, is in our case, within also.

of rest. God forbid that we should call it so! It is the house of corruption and decay, and so long as their bodies lie mouldering in it, the rest of the saints is not perfect. The grave is not the rest of Christ. He consented to descend into it, but not to abide in it. The Father in whom he trusted, raised him out of it, and the rest into which he has entered, in soul and body, is at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The rest into which Christ has thus entered, is compared in the text with the rest of God after the work of Creation: "He hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." But though there is a likeness between these rests, there is also a great difference. Creation was a work neither of suffering nor of toil. "God said, Let there be light," and "there was light:" "God said, Let the dry land appear," and "it was so."¹ But Christ did not say, Let man be saved; he toiled and laboured and suffered before it was so. Creation was a work of EASE; Redemption was a work of PAIN. But the pain made the rest the sweeter. No tongue of man may express, nor heart presume to conceive, how sweet was this rest to Jesus. He must indeed have welcomed the hour when his weary head was laid to rest, laid to rest on the pillow of his eternal Father's bosom.

But we have yet to speak of the rest of Christ as future; he shall not remain for ever where he now is. He hath "sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enefmies be made his footstool."² He shall then come again and assume his own throne, and that rest shall be revealed which yet remaineth for his people. The word in the ninth verse, which our translation renders "a rest," is in the original, a sabbatism. And what makes this more deserving of our attention, is the comparison here instituted between the rest of creation and the rest of glory. For it seems to bear out a constant tradition of the Jews, which is also affirmed by the early Christian fathers, viz., that as God was occupied for six days in the work of creation and rested on the seventh, so the world shall continue in its

¹ Genesis i. 2, 9.

² Hebrews x. 12, 13; Psalm cx. 1.

present state till six thousand years are completed, leaving a seventh thousand for the millennial rest or Sabbath of redemption. But there are difficulties attending this view; and instead of indulging in speculation beyond what is clearly written, let us contemplate rather the nature of Christ's rest, as it is pointed out to us by this most expressive phrase. God's rest on the seventh day was, as has been already remarked, not a rest from toil; it was a rest of holy complacency, satisfaction and delight. Scripture tell us that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth," and that "on the seventh he rested, and was refreshed."¹ He contemplated with infinite complacency the work which he had finished; it refreshed him to look upon it. The seventh day seems, from the text just cited, to have been devoted to this object by the great Creator: He seems to have occupied it in passing creation in review before his eye. The sun, the moon, the stars, moving in their several orbits and obeying the laws which he had imposed on them, would first attract his notice. He would next look on this green earth, clothed in its primeval beauty, and diversified, as he had ordained, with the varieties of ocean and solid land. He would look also on its living inhabitants; on the fishes sporting in the waters, on the birds exulting in the freedom of their wing, on the quadrupeds gambolling over the extensive plains. And last but chief of all, he would look on man made in his own image, and his eye would linger with peculiar complacency on Eden, where it beheld our first parents blessed in Him and in each other. And as he saw all these his works to be perfect in their several kinds, to be good, very good and worthy of himself, THE ALMIGHTY ARTIFICER WAS REFRESHED AND WAS GLAD. Such was the primeval rest, the rest of the Creator. And such shall be the rest of Christ, for it too is a Sabbathism. But the joy of this rest, the joy of THE REDEEMER CONTEMPLATING REDEMPTION, may not be expressed by the tongue, nor conceived by the heart of man. "He shall see," says Isaiah, "of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."²

¹ Exodus xxxi. 17.² Isaiah lili. 11.

For in the kingdom to come, which is the fruit of that travail, the name of the Father shall be hallowed, and his will shall be done on earth as now it is done in heaven. Sin shall in that day be made eternally infamous, and righteousness shall be exalted on high. The people of God delivered from that gulph of misery into which they had fallen, and exalted with their Saviour, shall cast their crowns at his feet and call him blessed. Satan, the fell destroyer, shall lie helpless in the burning lake, with all his power broken and all his works made an end of. This fair creation also, after having groaned for ages in his deadly grasp, and under the oppression of sin and misery, shall be filled with righteousness and peace as the waters cover the sea. And as all this passes in review before THE SAVIOUR'S DELIGHTED EYE, he "shall be satisfied;" acknowledging that in the bloody sweat of Gethsemane and groans of Calvary, he has travailed for an object worthy of himself. Nor shall our gracious Redeemer ever be bereaved of this joy. When creation came at first from its Creator's hand, it was very good and was pronounced by himself to be so, but the enemy soon marred and defiled it. But when it shall come from its Redeemer's hand, and when his word shall pronounce it good, no enemy shall mar or defile it any more for ever. It shall be established by his grace, in obedience to God and in the possession of his favour, and shall be the eternal object of Christ's complacency, satisfaction and delight. Such is the coming Sabbatism. Blessed is the man to whom it shall then be given to enter into his Saviour's joy!

II. This leads us to the next point which we proposed to consider: it is given to us, through faith, to partake with Christ in his rest. The rest which is set before us in the gospel, like that of Christ himself, is both a present and a future blessing. We need rest now, for in ourselves by nature we have none. We are the servants of sin, in miserable bondage to our lusts, appetites and passions. Satan also takes advantage of this evil heart to tempt us but too successfully, and to hurry us along the path of evil; and we alas, are not able to stop our career, being "taken captive by him at his

will."¹ But though we are thus led captive, conscience warns us that we are responsible, and torments us continually with fears of coming wrath. We are therefore by nature, wretched, realizing in our sad experience the truth of that expressive word which compares the carnal and unbelieving heart to "the troubled sea, when it cannot rest."² But amid the raging of these troubled waters the Saviour's voice is heard, "Come unto me...and I will give you rest."³ We listen, we believe, and all things become new with us. We no longer agonize under the convictions of conscience and fears of the wrath of God, for we trust in that blood which the gospel proclaims, and which "cleanseth from all sin." We are no longer hurried along the path of evil and taken captive by Satan at his will, for we open our hearts to him who is stronger than the strong one, and who taking up his abode in them, breaks the oppressor's chain. Nor are we any longer the slaves of our appetites and passions, for in the grace of the same Saviour we find deliverance from their power. We therefore walk at liberty as the freed-men of Christ and are in peace. We read that when of old he rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, the wind ceased and there was a great calm.⁴ So it is with us. Our troubled hearts hear his voice and are troubled no longer; "we which have believed, do enter into rest."

And the rest which Christ thus bestows on us, is both a qualification for his heavenly rest, and an earnest and foretaste of its blessedness. Those only who find rest in the Saviour now, shall rest with the Saviour in his eternal kingdom. And those to whom it shall at last be given to enter into that kingdom, are not strangers even now to its blessedness. Faith gives a present, virtual entrance; and therefore St. Paul, though speaking in the text of the rest of glory, says "we which have believed, do enter." There is moreover a connection between the present rest of Christ of which we have already spoken, and this present rest of his people; the one is founded on the other. As Christ rests in heaven, having finished the work of expiation and secured

¹ II Tim. ii. 26. ² Isaiah lvii. 20. ³ Matt. xi. 28. ⁴ Luke viii. 22—24.

the Holy Ghost, his people rest on earth, believing in that expiation and finding in that omnipotent grace strength against sin and Satan, and ability to serve God. They are thus "kept by his power, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."¹ And when it is revealed, they shall be glorified together with their Lord.

This leads me to speak of the believer's rest as a future blessing. Rest implies both previous suffering and previous labour; and therefore the rest of glory remains "to the people of God," for they only suffer, they only labour for him, they only require rest. They suffer, as their Lord did before them, in striving against sin, in overcoming the world, in resisting the temptations of the devil. And they labour, as he did before them, to do the will of God against all these opposing influences, spending themselves and being spent for the advancement of his glory on the earth. The same eternal rest therefore which is the reward of his toil and suffering is also laid up for them. There is an entrance into this rest in measure when the spirit leaves the body. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," saith the Scripture, for they "rest from their labours."² But it is in measure, for this is the rest of the spirit only. And the body which has toiled and suffered in the cause of God must have its reward also before the believer's rest is complete. That rest therefore shall be perfected at the resurrection of the just. Then shall the blessed martyr who gave his flesh to be shrivelled, the blood in his veins to be dried up, and his bones to be consumed to ashes by the devouring fire, be recompensed in his body for those agonies. Then shall the mouth and tongue which have spent themselves in pleading God's cause, the hands which have wrought righteousness, the feet which have often been wearied in his service, be recompensed eternally for their toil. Yea, the hand which has done no more than reach a cup of cold water to some of Christ's afflicted ones, shall in no wise lose its reward.³ "For we must all stand," says St. Paul, "before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive, through his body,

¹ I Peter i. 5.

² Revelations xiv. 13.

³ Matt. x. 42.

according to the things which he hath done."¹ And besides the reward of labour, this rest is release from suffering. Sin shall no longer exist to grieve those who have resisted and hated it. Nor shall an alluring world exist to spread its seductions before them. Nor shall a tempting devil have access to them any more. These things have no access to Christ. And the rest of his people shall be as his own rest; trouble shall approach them no more for ever.

But the future rest of the people of God shall be moreover like that of Christ, a Sabbatism. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,"² is the blessed invitation which shall be addressed to every one of them at last. We have seen already what the joy of Christ is; he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied for ever with what he sees. And their joy shall be the same. They shall see the fruit of their prayers and pains and toils, and shall be satisfied eternally. Before their daily bread, before even the forgiveness of their sins, they have desired to see the kingdom of their Father come, his name hallowed and his will done.³ What then shall be their joy when this desire of their hearts is granted? They have mourned because of the prevalence of sin and misery; and because of the power of Satan, the enemy of God, the deceiver and destroyer of mankind. Who then shall describe the comfort of these mourners,⁴ when sin and misery, Satan's hateful works, are brought to an everlasting end, and Satan himself is cast into the burning lake? No tongue can describe, no heart may attempt to conceive it. They shall raise the shout of eternal triumph, the shout of "salvation and glory and honour" to the Lord Jehovah. And as the smoke of the torment of his enemies ascends "for ever and ever," his people's hallelujahs shall be heard as "the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings." And the joy which shall inspire these hallelujahs, is that the long-promised kingdom is come at last, that "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Thus Scripture has described to us the blessedness of the rest of God. St. John was privileged, for our

¹ II Corin. v. 10, original.

² Matt. xxv. 21.

³ Lord's Prayer.

⁴ Matt. v. 4.

sakes, to listen to these hallelujahs, and to hear these songs of praise. And he has recorded them for our consolation, adding the remarkable announcement, "these are the true sayings of God."¹

It is needless for me to remark that this Sabbatism is reserved for the people of God only; for to others it would be no joy. He who loves not "the Lord God Omnipotent" cannot possibly "rejoice and be glad" because of the establishment of his eternal throne. And he who takes part with Satan, indulging himself in sin's forbidden pleasures and leading others into them, cannot possibly regard it as a cause for everlasting praise that the tempter is crushed and that all his works are destroyed. Those therefore who are of this mind shall have no portion in the rest of the Redeemer. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema."² He shall be anathema, when the Lord appears. "Depart from me, ye cursed,"³ shall be the divine sentence on him and on his fellows; and their portion, according to that sentence, shall be "in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."⁴

Let us show then that we are Israelites indeed, the true seed of Abraham, by setting our hearts now on the promises of Abraham's God. These promises are yet unappropriated, and the love of God still prolongs the day of our merciful visitation, because it has determined that they shall not be unenjoyed. The language of the text is peculiarly strong. "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached, entered not in because of unbelief, again he limiteth a certain day." This language moreover is another proof of what was stated in the last lecture, viz. that the place of Christ's rest is Canaan. God kept the Sabbath of creation on earth (for there is no division of days in heaven); and its locality was Eden. Christ in like manner shall keep the Sabbath of redemption on earth; and its locality shall be Canaan. The Shekinah glory abode on the bowers of Eden, while the Creator contemplated his finished work. And the same Shekinah shall abide on the

¹ Rev. xix. 1-7, 9. ² I Cor. xvi. 22. ³ Matt. xxv. 41. ⁴ Rev. xxi. 8.

towers of Mount Zion and on the palaces of Jerusalem while Christ rests in his love over a redeemed world. Man was privileged to keep the Sabbaths of creation in the presence of his God, for Jehovah came down into Eden in the cool of the day, seeking the society of his creature.¹ And man shall be privileged to keep the Sabbath of redemption in the presence of Christ, for the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and they shall be his people.² But there is this blessed difference. Sin and Satan broke up the rest of creation, and parted man from his God. But neither sin nor Satan shall break up the rest of redemption. The harmony which Christ by his blood and Spirit has restored between God and his believing people shall endure through eternal ages, as the throne of the Eternal himself. May God grant that his everlasting joy be ours !

¹ Genesis iii. 8.

² Revelations xxi. 3.

LECTURE VIII.

Hebrews iv. 11—13.

“ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight : but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

THE Apostle in these verses sums up and concludes the argument which we have been considering for the last four lectures. The first of them contains his final exhortation to the Hebrews and to us, that having the catastrophe of Israel in the desert before our eyes, we labour to enter into the rest of God. In the second he assigns an additional reason for his solemn earnestness, and removes what might arise in the mind as an objection to what he has advanced. Whilst the third contains such explanations as render it impossible for any one who deals honestly with himself, either to misunderstand his meaning or to evade his counsel. We shall take the verses in succession, applying their all-important contents at once to the case of the Hebrews and to ourselves.

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

We have been already exhorted to fear lest we come short of the rest ; now we are exhorted to labour to enter into it.

The exhortation is one ; only to render it more impressive, St. Paul repeats in the positive form, what he has before stated in the negative. He introduces both forms with his usual emphatic "therefore," because the reason for fearing and for labouring is one, viz. the sin and catastrophe of Israel. We must take heed however that we do not misunderstand this exhortation. Our hearts are naturally self-righteous, and we are prone to regard our works and labours as our title to eternal life. And looking at the text superficially, we may take encouragement from it in this evil course ; so far from representing God's kingdom as the reward of faith merely, St. Paul, we may say, bids us labour that we may enter into it. If disposed however to put this interpretation on his words, we have only to examine them more closely to discover our mistake. The labour which St. Paul here so earnestly recommends, so far from being opposed to faith or in any way distinct from it, is the labour of faith ; for he opposes it to the unbelief of Israel. He also alludes again for our warning, to the catastrophe of that unbelief. To explain his meaning therefore, let us call to mind what has already been fully set forth, viz. the nature of Israel's provocation and the cause of their fall. God had freely bestowed on them the promise of Canaan ; he had said and sworn that He would lead them into it ; but they refused to believe his word. He therefore swore that they should never see it. And though they afterwards bitterly regretted their folly, he refused to revoke his oath. This is the example of their unbelief. St. Paul's meaning then in this place cannot be better illustrated than by himself elsewhere. "Behold therefore," he says to the Romans, "the goodness and severity of God : on them which fell, severity ; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness : otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."¹ These words refer indeed to another subject, but the argument is the same. The goodness which bestowed on Israel in the desert the free promise of Canaan, has bestowed on us, in this gospel-day, the free promise of entrance into the rest of Christ. And our labour therefore must be, not

¹ Romans xi. 22.

the labour of works to deserve this promise ; but the labour of faith to abide in God's goodness, by embracing it now, and holding it fast with vigilant earnestness to the end. "Labour not," said our blessed Lord, "for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." His hearers, from the word labour, imagined that he was calling on them to do something, and discovered this by immediately asking him, "What shall we do?" But mark his reply. "This is the work of God," he said, "that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."¹ What they were to do was to believe in that goodness which had sent him into the world, and to embrace those declarations of love and promises of mercy which he had brought with him from the bosom of God. And the earnestness of attention and eagerness of faith which this blessed gospel claimed from them, are set forth by the Saviour in the word labour. The same thing is expressed by him in another place, in still stronger language ; *Wrestle, contend as for a prize*, he tells his hearers, "to enter in at the strait gate." He tells them elsewhere of this strait gate, that "few there be that find it." This doubtless is one reason for wrestling to enter into it, and he states as an additional reason in the Scripture just cited, that "many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able when once the Master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door."² How remarkable is the accordance between all this and the doctrine of St. Paul in the text ! In the example of unbelief referred to by him, two persons only, out of six hundred thousand, entered into the promised rest. And though that unbelieving congregation sought to enter in, they were not able ; God had sworn against them, and the door was shut. St. Paul therefore in the words before us, is only repeating his Master's admonition, and enforcing his Master's solemn warning.

And truly it is not without cause that the Apostle urges us to labour to enter into the rest of God. For another, even our adversary the devil, is labouring to keep us out of it. The sin that is in our hearts and the temptations of a wicked world, supply that adversary with instruments

¹ John vi. 27—29.

² Luke xiii. 24, 25, original ; Matt. vii. 14.

and occasions of evil, of which he makes continual and most malignant use. He addresses himself to our natural faithlessness, seeking to destroy any confidence in God which may be in us. He presents temptations suited to our evil propensities, and seeks to draw us into sin. He spreads the seductions of a wicked world before us and seeks to dazzle our eyes with its glare, that he may turn away our hearts from the word and promises of God. And he varies these accursed wiles according to our various dispositions and characters, that he may take us all in his net. For our destruction is the object which he is labouring continually to effect. Would to God that we were convinced of this awful truth, that there were laid bare before us the heart of this dreadful enemy, that we knew the hatred with which he hates us, the intensity of malice with which he plots against us continually! And it is not by a few languid aspirations after heaven, and a few heartless prayers for salvation, that such malice can be met and counteracted in its deadly working. It must be met on our part by continual vigilance. In proportion as the enemy seeks to shake our confidence in God, we must labour to have our faith and hope in his salvation kept in lively exercise. In proportion to the strength of the temptation which would draw us aside, we must labour to have our goings upheld in the way of the Divine commandments. And in proportion as the world spreads its alluring seductions before us, we must labour to have our sight and eyes turned from beholding vanity. We must be aware too of our besetting sin, of our vulnerable point, and we must labour to have that weakness strengthened that we may stand in the evil day. By thus continually looking to Jesus we shall foil and disappoint our malicious enemy. And it is to this labour of faith that St. Paul in the text exhorts us. He proceeds—

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.

The Hebrews might have objected to the application of the history of their fathers which St. Paul has been making in the preceding argument; they might have said that it was a past transaction with which they had nothing to do. It is indeed a past transaction, answers the Apostle, but it is the revelation of an abiding character. "For the word of God," i. e. his threatening against unbelief, is not the letter of an obsolete statute, the enactment of a legislator who has been dead for ages, but is "quick," i. e. of present living force, being the word of him who liveth and abideth for ever. It is indeed many hundred years since he uttered it against our fathers, but the word is as fresh now as when it then left his lips, for from generation to generation his mind remains the same. And besides being quick, it is "powerful." It is no idle utterance, the threatening of one who cannot do as he has said, but is certain and prompt in execution, being armed with the power of the ever-living Speaker. This powerfulness of the word of God is expressed in the language which follows, "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." With man there are two acts; he threatens with his mouth and then he slays with his hand. With God there is but one; He speaks and his word is death. And therefore we read in the Apocalyptic vision of Christ in glory, that "out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword,"¹ God has given many examples of this awful power of his word. When St. Paul said to Elymas the sorcerer "Thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season," there needed no more; "immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about, seeking some to lead him by the hand."² When St. Peter said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?...thou hast not lied unto men but unto God," the miserable man "hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost." And when the same apostle said immediately afterwards to Sapphira, "the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and

¹ Revelations i. 16.² Acts xiii. 9—11.

shall carry thee out," she also "fell down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost."¹ In each of these cases God's word executed itself; and in the two latter, when its utterance was death, it was proved indeed to be sharper than any two-edged sword. Israel in the wilderness had fearful proof of this. They said that God had brought them out of Egypt to deliver them into the hand of the Amorites, to slay them. But they found that the sword of the alarmed and incensed Canaanite, was not half so sharp to kill as was the word of an angry God. He uttered that word against them, and under its malediction they died. For forty years it continued slowly but surely to glean them one by one, and at the end of that period "there was not left a man" of those who had provoked the Lord. And God's threatening against unbelief has still the same deadly efficacy. No sharp sword with two edges has such power to wound the flesh, as the dreadful word "he that believeth not shall be damned,"² has power to wound the spirit. Let a conviction of our unbelief be only borne home on the conscience without a corresponding discovery of God's mercy in Jesus Christ, and we shall soon experience that this is true. Its truth shall yet be manifested. In the day of the Lord, when the unbelieving shall stand at his bar, their guilt shall be borne home on their consciences in the light of the eternal judgment-seat, and the Judge shall sentence them in terms of this very threatening. And then shall the power of his word be seen; its utterance shall be death. For God's favour is life; the conscious possession of his love is life eternal.³ And the essence of the second death is the consciousness on the part of the creature that it has for ever lost that favour. The dreadful word therefore, "Depart from me, ye cursed,"⁴—the word which assures them of this, shall pass through the miserable like a sword, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow," inflicting conscious death. Oh what intensity of meaning does all this give to the exhortation of St. Paul in the text! For if the word of God which excluded unbelieving Israel from his rest.

¹ Acts v. 3—10.² Mark xvi. 16.³ John xvii. 3.⁴ Matt. xxv. 41.

be indeed registered in heaven's eternal statute-book as of force through all generations, if unbelievers now are the objects against whom this word is directed, and if its utterance at last shall prove eternal death, surely no language can express the earnestness with which we should avoid the example of Israel's unbelief on the one hand, and labour to enter into the rest of God on the other. I feel at least most painfully that no language of mine can express it. May he who only teacheth savingly, impress it on our hearts by his grace!

St. Paul proceeds,—

And HE is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

St. Paul has just been reminding the Hebrews of the terrible power of God's threatenings, and he now brings before them the omniscience of him who threatens. His purpose in doing this is most evident. The Hebrews were then tempted to apostacy through the force of persecution, and he has therefore counselled them to fear the wrath of God as the best antidote to the fear of man. But some faint-hearted professor terrified by his awful language, might seek to compromise in this all-important matter; avoiding open apostacy lest he should incur Christ's wrath, and yet allowing himself in secret and sinful compliances that he might escape the world's frown. And he might suppose, in the blindness of his heart, that this was the course of wisdom and the path of safety. St. Paul therefore reminds such an one that Christ knows what he is thinking and discerns the intents of his heart. And to make this more impressive to a Hebrew, he illustrates it by an evident reference to the sacrifices under the law. When the animal was slain it was opened by the knife of the priest, and the heart, the liver, the kidneys, and all the inwards were laid bare before his eye. Even so is it, says the apostle, with the High-Priest

with whom we have to do. There is not a creature that is not manifest in his sight; our whole inner man lies bare and exposed before him. And he will not accept our sacrifice if he finds us to be half-hearted in his cause. Think not then, my brethren, St. Paul would say, to escape the threatenings of the Lord by a mere outward profession of his name. For he knows how to accomplish them on the hypocritical formalist, as well as on the open apostate.

The application of this warning to us is as obvious as the warning itself is necessary. We are not indeed in the circumstances of the Hebrews, and so are not exposed to their peculiar snares. But under every possible variety of circumstances, man's deceitful heart discovers its unchanging character. There are many whose fears have been awakened by the terrors of the coming wrath, and who feel the necessity of an interest in God's mercy. But they cannot tear their affections from a present evil world. And thinking of God that he is such an one as themselves, they seek to secure his pardon and avert his wrath by the assiduity of their outward homage. They are found in his house and at his table; they are constant in the observance of all the external decencies of religion: but their hearts all the while have never known his kindness, have never beat with a quicker throb at the mention of his love, have never been gladdened with the hope of eternal life in his presence, and are utter strangers to that glow of grateful affection which is the animating principle of the believer's obedience. For St. John has warned us that "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."¹ And we learn from St. Paul, that the heart which is not divorced from things seen and temporal, never can dwell among the things unseen and eternal.² This however is the religion of many whose conduct is consistent and whose outward profession is fair. Is it our religion? Are these "the thoughts and intents" to which our hearts are conscious? Or, are we thinking of God as of a Father who has loved us and deserves our love in return? Are we repaying his Fatherly

¹ 1 John ii. 15.

² 11 Corinthians iv. 18.

kindness with childlike affection and confidence, and seeking to keep his commandments that we may glorify his worthy name? Are our hearts now with him and with Jesus our Saviour above, and are we cheered as we travel through this wilderness, by the hope of being with him for ever? In short, is our religion a form or is it a reality? Is it the religion of faith and love, or the service of the unloving, calculating and selfish heart? We shall do well to ask ourselves these questions, and may God give us grace to return a faithful answer! There is One who knows the truth, who is acquainted exactly with the state of matters between our souls and God. Jesus the Omniscient One "with whom we have to do," discerns every thought and intention of our hearts, for there is not a creature that is not manifest in his sight, and all things are open to his eye. There is nothing in this to discourage us, if we are unfeignedly trusting in his mercy, and seeking to walk in his blessed ways. We may mourn over our faith as feeble, over our love as languid, over our obedience as miserably imperfect; but if these shortcomings are our grief, he will not reject us because of them. He breaks not the bruised reed nor quenches the smoking flax; he rejects not any from his mercy in whom "there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel."¹ But there is everything in the omniscience of the Saviour to alarm us out of a dead profession. Such a profession may indeed pass unchallenged by man, because he judges the heart by the conduct. But it shall not abide the searching glance of Christ's eye, because he judges the conduct by what he knows of the heart. And that religion which has not sprung from faith and love shall be pronounced by him at last to have been worthless, while those who have trusted in it shall be cast into utter darkness.

The solemnity of this consideration is greatly enhanced by the peculiarity of the language employed, and by the evident reference of the text to our Saviour's priesthood. St. Paul does not say that "all things are naked and open" to Christ's eyes. This would have brought before the mind

¹ I Kings xiv. 13.

simply the omniscience of the Creator. The phrase is "naked and opened," implying that concealment if attempted is hopeless, that the hand of the righteous Judge tears every disguise away. Besides, the word "opened" refers to opening with the knife, which brings Christ's priesthood at once before us. When an Israelite would present an offering to the Lord, he brought it to the priest. The animal, let us suppose, appears outwardly to be in good condition. But the priest, having received it at the hand of the offerer, slays and cuts it open. And behold on inspection, he finds disease and insipient death within! What, I ask, would in these circumstances, have been the judgment of a Jewish high-priest? "CURSED be the deceiver," he would have said, "who voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing."¹ Now this was but a type of a deeply solemn reality. All the worship, service and obedience which we render to God, passes through the hands of Christ, and is submitted to his searching eye. That eye pierces indeed through all nature, but the members of the professing Church invite its inspection by putting their sacrifices into his hand. And what language can express the boldness, nay the impious audacity of the man who puts into the hands of that High-Priest a corrupt sacrifice! Well may St. Paul say, "having an High-Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart."² For the heart is the sacrifice which God seeks. And all worship, service and obedience professes to come from it, and to be the genuine expression of its feelings. But if Christ takes up the heart whose outward seeming is so fair, and finds it full of worldliness, of selfishness, of sinister motives, of corrupt principles, of spiritual death within,—what, oh what shall be his judgment? I dare not attempt to translate it into language, for human language is too weak to carry its dreadful burden. Nor shall the Judge himself stand in need of language to express his anger. The glance of his eye has detected the hypocrisy, and the rebuke of that eye of Omniscience shall be the hypocrite's torment for ever.

¹ Malachi i. 14.² Hebrews x. 21, 22.

Let us then be honest with ourselves and not misunderstand the counsel of the text. In urging us to labour to enter into God's rest, St. Paul, as we have seen, distinctly warns us that the profession of faith shall not suffice, that the gospel of the grace of God must be received into the heart, and must win for God the heart's love and confidence. Even when this is the case, as I have already stated, we shall have much weakness to lament, and many faults and sins to mourn over. But still, where faith is genuine, we shall be true-hearted with God. St. Peter was rash and self-confident and fell into the awful sin of denying his Lord and Master. But amid it all St. Peter was true-hearted; "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee,"¹ was his appeal to his Omniscient Lord. And Christ forgave St. Peter. For he knows how to forgive sin where the heart is true. But hypocrisy and insincerity is what he will not pardon.

I cannot but remark, before leaving this Scripture, that it contains a most striking testimony to the supreme Godhead of Christ. It ascribes to him that word whose utterance is death, and that eye before whose glance all creation lies revealed. If we have any doubt that St. Paul is here speaking of Christ, let us compare the text with the symbolical language of St. John, and with Christ's explanation of that language. When "the Son of Man" appeared to him in Patmos, St. John tells us that "his eyes were as a flame of fire," and that "out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."² Christ explains the latter symbol by threatening the church of Pergamos, "I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." And he explains the former symbol yet more distinctly by declaring to Thyatira, "All the Churches should know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts."³ St. John therefore has told us in symbol, what St. Paul in the text, tells us without a symbol. And Christ's interpretation of the symbol of the one apostle, exactly agrees with the testimony borne to him by the other.

We are now arrived at the close of the second great division of our subject. Let us review for an instant, the argument

¹ John xxi. 17.

² Revelations i. 16, 18.

³ Rev. ii. 16, 23.

which we have been considering in detail. It commences by declaring Christ to be better than Moses, because he is the Son of God, the builder of all things, the builder of that Church of which Moses was but a part, the Head and Master of that family in which Moses was but a servant. It then goes on to remind us that Moses was appointed to lead Israel from Egypt to Canaan, but that "all who came out of Egypt" under his guidance, save only two, came short of that rest by unbelief. Christ in like manner, as we are next reminded, has been appointed by the Father as our heavenly guide to conduct us to the land of eternal rest. And from this similarity between our circumstances and those of Israel, St. Paul takes occasion to exhort us most earnestly to avoid the catastrophe of their unbelief. He then closes the argument as he commenced it, bringing forward again, as we have just seen, the supreme Divinity of that "leader and commander" with whom we have to do, whose arm, is almighty to smite unbelief, and his eye omniscient to detect hypocrisy. Such is the close and consecutive argument of this second division of our epistle. Let us ask the grace of God that these blessed truths may sink into our hearts! That same glorious Being to whom the omnipotent arm and omniscient eye belong, took on him our nature and put away our sins in his cross, that we might be saved eternally. Men ask, is salvation such an easy thing that we are saved by faith only? No, salvation is the most difficult of all things, but Christ has borne the difficulty; he has laboured that we may rest. The only labour which he has left to us is to enter into his rest. To which may God incline our hearts!

¹ Isaiah lv. 4.

PART III.

SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO AARON AND HIS SONS.

LECTURE I.

Hebrews iv. 14—16.

"Seeing then that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

ST. PAUL, in the words which we have just read, enters on the third division of his great subject. He has already demonstrated to the Hebrews that Jesus the Son of God and man, is better than prophets and angels. He has also demonstrated that Jesus the Apostle of God, the Head and Master of his Father's house, is better than Moses. And now his object is to prove to them that Jesus the High-Priest of our profession, is better than Aaron and the priests of Aaron's family. This is indeed the main subject of the epistle. The verses before us may be regarded as the introduction to it, for they suggest those considerations which are afterwards enlarged upon. We shall consider them

successively. There is a most beautiful connection between the topics of each; they are like the golden links of a perfect chain.

Seeing then that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed THROUGH the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast THE profession.

Before proceeding to the exposition of these words, let me make a single remark in elucidation of the epistle generally. The *subject* of the second part of it, is Christ's Apostolic Ministry; its *object* is exhortation; its *key-note* is "consider." The *subject* of this third part, is Christ's Priesthood; its *object* is encouragement; its *key-note* is "hold fast." St. Paul is now passing from the one to the other; let us observe his manner of doing so.

There are no abrupt transitions here or anywhere in his discourse. He has already introduced Christ to us in the character of High-Priest, for he has spoken of him as the Omniscient One who discerns the inwards of our spiritual sacrifices. And the subject which he has thus, as it were, casually brought before us, he now follows up at large; "seeing then," he continues, "that we have a great High-Priest." He has already spoken of Christ as having entered into his rest, and following up this theme, he now reminds the Hebrews that this High-Priest "is passed through the heavens." They had been accustomed under the law, to a high-priest who, on the great day of atonement, passed through the outer court and holy place into the holiest of all, bearing with him the blood of the sacrifice, and burning incense before the mercy-seat.¹ And while he did so, "the whole multitude" of Israel "was praying without."² The great High-Priest, says St. Paul, of whom I now speak, has in like manner passed through the visible heavens into the invisible, the dwelling-place of the Father's majesty, bearing with him the blood of his own sacrifice, and making, on the ground of that sacrifice, continual intercession for us. This

¹ Leviticus xvi. 11—14.

² Luke i. 10.

High-Priest is "Jesus the Son of God." We need not therefore be afraid that his intercession shall be in vain; the Father hears his Son. And we his people who pray here on earth, shall be heard for his sake who prays for us within the veil. Seeing then that these things are so, "let us hold fast the profession." Let us not be afraid because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy. Let us not be tempted, through his violence, to dissemble with the Omniscient One, but let us boldly and faithfully profess Christ's name. He knows that it is our faithfulness to him which exposes us to persecution, and he therefore cannot forget us at the right hand of God. And no earthly violence can possibly overwhelm those who are privileged to be thus remembered above.

For we have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

The conjunction "for," with which this verse commences, indicates at once the connection between it and the preceding. You speak, the Hebrews might have said, of Jesus interceding for us above, and bid us therefore take courage. But one so "great" as "the Son of God," dwelling amid the glories of eternity at the right hand of his Father, cannot possibly know much of the infirmities, or care much for the sufferings of us poor mortals dwelling here on earth. You greatly mistake, my brethren, if you think so, is the answer of St. Paul. The High-Priest of whom I now speak to you, is not one "who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He took to himself our nature that he might make these infirmities his own; and having made them his own, he "was tempted in all points, like as we are." I have spoken of him as the Son of God, that you may know that his intercession is available. But let not this tempt you for an instant to forget that he is the Son of man, and that his sympathy with the inhabitants of earth, is as perfect and as tender as his glory is great among the inhabitants of heaven.

And oh learn from his example that infirmity and temptation are no excuse for sin ; for though begirt with infirmity and surrounded with temptation, he was "without sin." When your flesh shrinks from suffering, you have the comfort of his sympathy : but when you turn into crooked ways to avoid suffering, that sympathy at once and entirely ceases. Know therefore, oh ye Hebrews, the tenderness but yet the purity of your Lord. His dignity does not destroy his tenderness, but neither does his tenderness trench upon his awful purity.

The subject which was thus pressed on the attention of the Hebrews, is one of vital importance to the Church of God, and will continue to be so till the end of time. Our hope of eternal salvation depends on the intercession of that great High-Priest whom the Father heareth always. We are also encouraged to confess his name on earth because we are assured that he remembers us in heaven. And our daily comfort amid the trials, temptations and sorrows of time, flows from the knowledge of his sympathy. We have already considered the former subject, the dignity of the Son of God, and shall have occasion to consider it again : I therefore dwell not on it now. But let me speak for a little most earnestly on the latter,—the sympathy of the Son of Man. It is evident from St. Paul's language, that infirmity is not sin, but that it furnishes nevertheless occasion against us to our subtle and restless enemy. Let us then inquire in the first place, what our infirmity is and how Christ partook of it : in the second place, how through participation of it, he was "tempted in all points like as we are : " and in the third place, how in the midst of temptation, he still remained the holy One of God.

I. God has formed the human creature with a certain capacity of happiness and a certain susceptibility of pain, both in mind and body. It is of our very nature to desire this happiness, and it cannot be set before us without the desire being called forth. It is also of our very nature to avoid this pain ; we shrink from it intuitively. This shrinking of nature, is our infirmity. And our blessed Lord can be touched with the feeling of it because he possessed it

himself. For Jesus was a man. His human nature was pure indeed, but still it was human nature. He could appreciate the comforts of home, the fellowship of kindred ; he was capable of receiving happiness from the esteem and love of those who were about him. And the same humanity gave capacity of pain to a far greater extent than we can conceive. For sin has blunted our feelings, but perfect purity imparted tenderness to his. No human being therefore ever felt hatred, reproach and shame so acutely as did the blessed Jesus. "Reproach hath broken my heart," he says, "and I am full of heaviness ; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none ; and for comforters, but I found none."¹ And his deeply affecting words "foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,"² bring before the mind, in all their poignancy, the desolate feelings of the homeless one, who was a stranger to his brethren and an alien to his mother's children.³ His bodily frame moreover was as delicately fashioned as ours is, and his nerves were as exquisitely susceptible of pain and anguish. Nature therefore in him shrank from bodily and mental suffering, and fainted under the endurance of it, just as it does in us. It is not without a purpose, as I shall now proceed to shew, that our gracious God has provided for us such a High-Priest.

II. Satan takes most signal advantage of this infirmity which is in us, to tempt us to sin. He tempts in two ways, by promise and by threatening. He watches his opportunity to present something to the mind which is not in itself evil, but which cannot be had without disobedience to God. He then works on our unwillingness to forego the advantage, that he may thereby lead us into sin ; continually whispering that it may be ours, if we will consent to the offered terms. This is temptation by promise. But if the tempter finds that in this he makes no way, and that he cannot bribe us out of the path of obedience, he takes another course, addressing our infirmity with greater advantage still. He brings before the mind the losses and crosses, the dangers

¹ Psalm lxxix. 20.² Matt. viii. 20.³ Psalm lxxix. 8.

and sufferings, yea (if God permit him) even the death which shall certainly encounter us if we dare to go forward; and he seeks by thus working on our fears, to make nature give back, and to turn us out of the way of God. This is temptation by threatening. Under these two heads may be classed almost all Satan's temptations of the righteous; and God's choicest saints have often fallen before him, when addressed in either way. Thus it was with righteous Lot, when from love to the well-watered plain of Sodom he consented to dwell within its accursed confines, foregoing his duty to God for the sake of worldly advantage. And thus it was also with St. Peter, when from fear of being condemned with his Master he denied with curses that he had ever seen his face. And if Satan can thus deal with the righteous, how easy must be his task with the wicked! For they love sin for its own sake, and so require no subtlety, and no addressing of infirmity; they are "taken captive by him at his will."¹

But St. Paul is speaking in the text, of the temptations of righteous men, and for our consolation, if we are so, he declares expressly that our blessed Lord and Saviour was "tempted in all points like as we are." He was tempted by promise, and he was tempted also by threatening. We have examples of this in the record of his life and ministry. The memorable scene in the wilderness was a temptation by promise, an attempt to bribe him from the path of obedience and duty. "The devil, taking him up into a high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time: and said...All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them...if thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine."² The circumstances of the tempted were on this occasion a peculiar advantage to the tempter. For he to whom this splendid offer was made, was the son of a carpenter of Nazareth, without wealth and without distinction. But oh the change had he accepted it! The poor Nazarene should have been the monarch of the world, the inheritor of its opulence and splendour; and, as an eloquent writer has beautifully

¹ II Timothy II. 26.² Luke iv. 5—7.

and truly expressed it, "the victories of Alexander would have sunk into insignificance before the glories of the King of the Jews."¹ But Jesus would not accept it because he abhorred the terms. Rather than consent to them, he deliberately put from him on the one hand, a life of honour, opulence and ease, and as deliberately embraced on the other, one of shame, poverty and suffering. He was not indifferent to what he thus rejected, nor did he love for its own sake the pain and shame which he embraced instead: the deep reality of his human feelings forbade such apathy. But this deep reality only added lustre to his victory, and made his choice that bright manifestation of love to the Father which God designed it to be. And Satan finding that he could not be moved by promises, made trial before the end of his ministry, whether his constancy could be shaken by fear. For the same evangelist to whose account of the scene in the wilderness we have just referred, has recorded also the awful conflict of Gethsemane. And that conflict, I have not a doubt, was occasioned by temptation of the devil. I am aware that this is not a common sentiment: the mysterious "agony and bloody sweat" of that fearful hour are generally regarded as the effects of penal wrath. But this is to confound the garden with the cross. "He bore our sins in his own body," not in the garden, but "*on the tree*."² In the cross Jesus met the Father as the penal avenger of sin, for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."³ But in the garden he met the tempter. For he said, just before entering it, "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me,"⁴ *i.e.* he cometh in search of some latent wickedness, some disobedience of heart, some evil affection of which he can make use; but he shall retire baffled, for he shall find none. And aware that Satan came on this accursed errand, he had no sooner entered the garden than he said to his three chosen followers, "tarry ye here and watch with me." We do not watch against a friend, and Jesus watched not against his Father. We watch against an enemy, and Jesus watched

¹ Horæ Hebraicæ.² I Peter ii. 24.³ Galations iii. 13.⁴ John xiv. 30.

against the tempter. And he had good cause to do so; that dreadful enemy soon appeared. For our Lord said to his disciples, on rising the first time from prayer, "could ye not watch with me one hour?—watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And these were experimental words; the words of one who had himself entered into temptation, and was then feeling its dreadful power, of one who though more than sustained by the willingness of his devoted spirit, felt at that moment even to agony, the weakness of his frail flesh. I say this with confidence, because we read it in holy Scripture. The prayer of the prostrate sufferer, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done!"¹—that prayer, I say, three times repeated, testified to the weakness of the quivering flesh, and declared at the same instant the submissive obedience of the ready spirit. What then, it may be asked, was the temptation of this dreadful hour? In the light of the Scriptures which I have cited, I can have no hesitation in answering that it was temptation to refuse the cup. That enemy who had passed in bright review before him in the wilderness, all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, passed now in dark review before his eye all the bitter aggravations of his approaching passion. Nothing, we may be assured, would be wanting which malice could suggest. The betrayal, the condemnation, the buffeting and spitting, the scourging and crowning with thorns, the nailing to the cross, the agonies of that lingering death, the darkness and coldness of the grave; all this, and much more than this would be made to press with inconceivable pain on the afflicted spirit of the Man of sorrows. And as "the iron entered into his soul," as he saw before him the dreadful sufferings which would be the certain consequence of obedience to his Father's will, the tempter seized his opportunity to urge him to be disobedient, to avoid these sufferings by refusing the proffered cup. And had that enemy prevailed to elicit one wish, one expression of desire, it would have been enough, for "more than twelve

¹ Matthew, xxvi. 36—42.

legions of angels"¹ waited only for the sufferer's word. But he did not prevail. His malice tortured the weak flesh, but could not shake for an instant, the resolution of the willing spirit. Nay it confirmed it, for in his extremity the afflicted One sought his Father. And from him he received "mercy and grace to help" in his "time of need;" "there appeared unto him," says St. Luke, "an angel from heaven, strengthening him." The tempter seems to have been conscious of this increase of strength and to have pressed his temptation with greater vehemence than ever; for immediately after receiving it, our Lord was "in an agony." But as this agony increased "he prayed more earnestly," till the struggle between the willing spirit on the one hand, and the weak flesh fainting at the awful prospects before it on the other, assumed a character so dreadful that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."² "Ye have not yet resisted *unto blood*," says St. Paul to the Hebrews, "striving against sin."³ Let us behold the bright pattern of such resistance in Jesus our blessed Redeemer. His Father's will was death, but he refused to disobey it, though the refusal threw nature into such an agony that it wrung from him a sweat of blood.

III. And thus it was, as the words of the text declare, that Jesus, though tempted in all points like as we are, was "yet without sin." For whether Satan sought to dazzle him with visions of worldly glory on the one hand, or to terrify him with the prospect of death on the other, he failed to excite a single rebellious feeling, or to call forth even a half-formed wish contrary to the will of God. To the offer of worldly glory when made to him in the wilderness, as the price of disobedience, he answered with holy indignation, "Get thee behind me, Satan."⁴ And his parting words as he left the garden, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall not I drink it?"⁵—declared that contest over, and the victory won. But we must not be satisfied with mere admiration of the sinless conqueror. For we are liable at any

¹ Matthew xxvi. 53.² Luke xxii. 43, 44.³ Hebrews xii. 4.⁴ Luke iv. 8.⁵ John xviii. 11.

time to enter into temptation, and he has left to us "an example, that we should follow his steps;"¹ overcoming as he overcame. It becomes us therefore reverently to inquire with what weapons Jesus encountered and foiled our malicious enemy. Scripture declares this most distinctly. "*It is written*,"² was the Saviour's weapon in the wilderness; he silenced the tempter by the word of God. And again we read that "through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot;"³ for he prevailed in the power of the Holy Ghost, against all the suggestions of the tempter and in spite of the weakness of the flesh, to give himself a willing sacrifice. These then must be our weapons. We must open our hearts to the Spirit of Jesus and have his word dwelling in us richly: and when temptation comes it shall not take us unprepared. And though we may not pass through it scathless and unharmed as the Saviour did, we shall surely be "more than conquerors through him that loved us."⁴

This practical application of the subject is suggested by the Apostle in the last verse of the text.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The Hebrews were then exposed to such affliction and suffering, that without the merciful remembrance of their Heavenly Father and his grace to help them in their time of need, they could not hope to stand. St. Paul therefore reminds them for their encouragement, that this was his own case; that as he with them had a great and merciful High-Priest, so he with them was exposed to continual trouble. And joining himself with them, he points to the common refuge, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace." To come to this throne "boldly" is to approach to God with confidence of being heard. The ground of this confidence is contained in the preceding verses, as we learn from the word "therefore." We have a great High-Priest, even the Son of God, who

¹ 1 Peter ii. 21. ² Luke iv. 4—12. ³ Hebrews ix. 14. ⁴ Rom. viii. 37.

pleads for us before his Father ; let us therefore come boldly. We have a High-Priest who knows by personal experience our infirmities, sorrows and temptations ; in soliciting aid from above, let us therefore come boldly. This last consideration is one of peculiar power, and must have been precious to the troubled Hebrew Church beyond what language can express. They were called on for Christ's sake to make many sacrifices, and to undergo much which was grievous to flesh and blood. And they might have said to St. Paul, you tell us of a great High-Priest that can help us, but we are ashamed to tell him of all our little infirmities and all our shrinkings of nature. Do not be ashamed, answers the Apostle ; tell him of them boldly. These infirmities were once his own, and he will not despise you for them. It is indeed so : blessed be the Lord that we can say it ! Let the martyr before he embraces the stake, go to Jesus and say, Thou once did sweat blood in dark Gethsemane at the prospect of thy cup ; have pity therefore upon me, for nature is in an agony at the prospect of mine. Let him say, Lord, pity me as thou thyself wast pitied ; help me as thou thyself in that awful hour wast helped. This is a prayer to which the very heart of him who sits on the throne will respond ; a prayer which will surely bring down mercy and grace to help in time of need.

We are invited to come thus boldly "to the throne of grace." God's throne of grace under the law was on the mercy-seat, between the Cherubim, within the vail. But no Israelite dared to enter into that terrible and sacred darkness ; if he had done so, he would have atoned for his boldness with his life. He saw the High-Priest enter in, and hoped through his offices to be remembered of God ; but his own place was without. It is not so now ; "the vail of the temple" is now "rent in twain,"¹ and the holiest of all is open. Jesus is on the right hand of the throne of grace in heaven,² and we may therefore approach boldly to the throne of grace on earth. We may express this without a symbol. Jesus is pleading for us above, as a Son with his Father ; and

¹ Matt. xxvii. 51.

² Hebrews viii. 1.

we may therefore, as children with their father, plead for ourselves below, for we "are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."¹ It is this filial pleading, I again repeat, which will bring down mercy and secure grace to help us. It was thus with our blessed Lord himself, when he agonized in Gethsemane. His cry "Abba Father," pierced the heavens and brought down the ministering angel. And the "Abba Father" of his troubled children pierces in like manner the heavens now. And God answers it by bending on them his pitying eye, and stretching forth for their aid, his helping hand. For he ministers to them that Holy Ghost through whom Jesus triumphed in the garden, and fills them with the strengthening consolations of that word with which he foiled the tempter in the desert.

It is impossible to pass from this without remarking on the wonderful encouragement to prayer which is given in the blessed gospel. It is not merely that One pleads for us above who is at once the Son of God and our Brother; he with whom he pleads, is his Father and our Father, his God and our God.* Can any needful mercy then, can any grace to help be asked in vain? No, the supposition is blasphemy. Well says St. Peter, "who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"² Aye, who indeed! The question may be asked, but neither earth nor hell can furnish the reply. For "if God be for us," says St. Paul, "who can be against us?"³

And let us remember in conclusion, that the consolation with which these precious truths are filled, was designed not for the Hebrews only, but for God's people to the end of time. It was laid up for them in his word against their hour of need. Nor was it laid up in vain. The day arrived when the writer of this inspired Scripture, had in his own time of need no other consolation to fall back upon. For St. Paul, as we all know, was beheaded at Rome; and as he lay cold and desolate in the damp Roman prison, "ready to be offered," and with the day of his departure "at hand,"⁴

¹ Galat. iii. 26. ² John xx. 17. ³ I Peter iii. 12. ⁴ Rom. viii. 31.

⁵ II Timothy iv. 6.

nature in him doubtless, as in us, shrank from the contemplation of this bloody exit. St. Peter also became a martyr in the same heathen city, being crucified with his head to the earth. It was not in human nature to anticipate with calmness such a fearful death. But St. Peter had been in Gethsemane, and had been "a witness" there "of the sufferings of Christ;"¹ he had seen the Lord Jesus, (wondrous spectacle!) prostrate on the ground in his fearful agony. And oh what boldness must this have given to the servant in appealing to his master's gracious pity! And the same consolation was laid up for the other apostles, who, save St. John only, were all gathered to their rest by the sword, the fire and the torture. It was laid up also for the martyrs of the early ages, who followed the example which apostles had so nobly set. And it has been from their day till now, the stay of God's persecuted people. The men who in this very land of England, died in Popish flames that truth might live,—Cranmer and Ridley, and Latimer and Hooper, and many more besides, "being dead, yet speak"² to us, and tell us that this is so. And all God's faithful people of this and every age, though not called upon to pass through their sufferings, have borne and bear the same witness. They tell us that without the consolation of which we are now speaking, they could not have withstood the shock of the sicknesses, the bereavements, and the other manifold trials of life. We shall do well to think of this. Some hour of darkness is awaiting us all. And that cold-hearted unbelief which makes up the mind to life's inevitable ills, is a miserable preparation for it. Let our preparation be that of the tender-hearted Christian, who trusts that when his spirit is wounded and his heart is broken, a father's love will comfort and a father's hand will bind up. And for aught we know, a peculiar "time of need" may now be awaiting the Church of God. The ominous character of the present fearful times, justifies us in fearing that persecution for Christ's sake may not be far away. Popery and Infidelity are at this moment both striving for the mastery. And if

¹ 1 Peter v. 1.² Hebrews xi. 4.

either of these unclean spirits become dominant, what shall be the issue to God's Church and people? If the future may be judged of by the past, this question is easily answered. Infidelity indeed has never persecuted, but Popery has always done so when she has possessed the power. We are told indeed that there is no danger of persecution now, because Popery is altogether changed. I have read somewhere of men extracting the claws of the tiger, and then using him as a domestic play-thing. And such, I suppose, is now the case, and we may play with the wild beast without fear of harm. But peradventure these claws are only sheathed, and not extracted; peradventure that tiger has not forgot his spring! Almighty God grant that it be not so, and that we may never have such occasion for the precious consolation of the text! But if it be otherwise, may we prove its value, finding strength to stand in the evil day!

LECTURE II.

Hebrews v. 1—4.

“For every high-priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was AARON.”

It is worthy of remark, that from the fourteenth verse of the fourth chapter of this epistle to the close of the tenth verse of the fifth, is one unbroken sentence. It ought indeed to have formed one chapter, for it contains the introduction to the subject which is treated of in the third division of the epistle, viz. the priesthood of Christ. In the first three verses, which we considered in the last lecture, this great subject is generally introduced. In the four following verses which we have read now, the Apostle enters more into detail, particularizing three things concerning the Jewish priesthood, viz. their functions, their qualifications, and their call. And in the six remaining verses, which we shall consider in the next lecture, he shews that these three things have been and are fulfilled in their great antitype, the Lord Jesus.

Such, I repeat, is his introduction. Having thus stated his subject, he pauses for a moment to warn and exhort the Hebrews, but speedily returns to his main argument, taking up these three topics one by one and dwelling on them minutely. He begins with Christ's call, proceeds from that

to his qualifications, and from them to his functions; demonstrating him to be, in all these respects, immeasurably superior to Aaron and his family. And to shew this more fully, he goes on to compare the acknowledged inefficacy of their sacrifices and their priesthood with the efficacy of his. This argument extends to the eighteenth verse of the tenth chapter, where the third division of the epistle terminates. St. Paul having then demonstrated the superiority of Christ to Angels, to Moses, and to Aaron, takes leave of doctrine, devoting what remains of the epistle, to admonition, encouragement and warning.

With these preliminary observations, that we may distinctly understand at what part of the epistle we are now arrived, let us direct our attention specially to the contents of the text.

For every high-priest taken from among men, is ordained for men, in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

St. Paul has just told the Hebrews, as we saw in the last lecture, that Christ in the heavens was transacting with God on their behalf. And he now goes on to say, you may understand the nature of his FUNCTIONS in the temple above, by observing those of your own priesthood in the temple below. "For every high-priest taken from among men," is ordained to transact with God on men's behalf; and this transaction consists, as you know, in his offering "both gifts, and sacrifices for sins." We must not confound these two things together: a gift and a sacrifice were carefully distinguished from each other by the law of Moses. An Israelite wished to offer something to God as a testimony of gratitude for mercies received. God permitted him to do so; and what he offered was his gift. Again, if the same man had transgressed the law of Moses, he brought his sacrifice that his sin might be put away. But if any Israelite, presuming on the divine mercy, had entered into the holy place and laid his gift with his own hands on God's altar, he would have been struck dead for his temerity. He was

enjoined to bring it to the priest, who receiving it at his hand, presented it to the Lord and blessed the giver. We have an example of this in the history of Samuel. His parents desired to dedicate him to God's service; and "they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli." And Eli, who was then God's priest, received at their hands this costly gift, and blessed them both in return.¹ The case was the same with the sacrifice; the offender brought it to the priest. There was also a striking connection between gifts and sacrifices. If any Israelite was unclean by reason of transgression, his gift could not be accepted till he was cleansed from such uncleanness by sacrifice. But being so cleansed, he was at liberty to draw near and present it.

The text informs us that it was the duty of the priest to offer the sacrifice as well as the gift. There is an erroneous impression on this subject. Many persons suppose that when the priest slew the victim, the sacrifice was offered; and that in the shedding of its blood the sin was put away. But this was by no means the case. The slaying of the victim was not an act peculiar to the priest; any Israelite might on most occasions, slay his own sacrifice.² The act peculiar to the priest was presenting the blood before the Lord. This was done on ordinary occasions, by dipping his finger in it and sprinkling it "before the vail of the sanctuary."³ And it was done on extraordinary occasions, by sprinkling it before the mercy-seat, within the vail. But until it was done, the sacrifice was not considered to have been offered, nor was the sin forgiven. A reference to Old Testament-Scripture will prove the truth of this remark. There was a great atonement once a year, for Aaron and his house, and for all the congregation of Israel. Let us observe what God enjoined concerning it. "Aaron shall bring the bullock...which is for himself...and shall kill the bullock...and shall take of the blood...and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat seven times." "Then shall he kill the goat of the sin-offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within

¹ 1 Samuel i. 25; ii. 20.

² Levit. vi.; iii.; iv.

³ Levit. iv. 6.

the vail,...and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat." It was thus that God's anointed high-priest was to "make atonement for himself and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel."¹ And as a sign that it was accepted, he was to come out and bless the people in God's name. This was done on the day of Aaron's consecration. After the sacrifices had been slain, and their blood had been presented to the Lord, "Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation and came out and blessed the people."²

Such were the high functions of the Jewish priesthood. They transacted between God and his people; entering into his presence on their behalf, to present to him the blood of their sacrifices, and to lay their gifts on his altar; and coming forth again to assure them on his behalf, of his forgiving mercy and gracious acceptance of their offerings. Attention to these details is most important. They are a sure and safe guide, as I shall have occasion in this lecture to point out, to a right understanding of the gospel of Christ.

St. Paul proceeds to state their QUALIFICATIONS.

BEING ABLE TO DEAL GENTLY WITH *the ignorant and* ERRING.

We learn from these words that to fit him for his holy functions a Jewish high-priest required the grace of patience. The character of those on whose behalf he mediated with God rendered this grace necessary; for they are here described as "ignorant and erring," and this is more or less the character of all men. We are all by nature slow in acquiring the knowledge of God, slow to learn his will and to keep his commandments. This is the ignorance here spoken of; and it is continually leading us, unless the grace of God prevent, out of his ways of righteousness and truth, into our own ways of sin and folly. I need not say that this was the character of Israel. Let us take as an example the generation of the wilderness over whom Aaron was appointed

¹ Leviticus xvi. 11-17.

² Leviticus ix. 22, 23.

high-priest. Look at their slowness to apprehend the will, and to learn the statutes of the Lord; look at their continual departures from him. Aaron must have been indeed endued with the grace of patience; without the continual exercise of forbearing and compassionate love he would soon have grown weary of presenting sacrifice on sacrifice, to avert the wrath of God from an obstinate and sinful people. And Israel's character was the same in the days of Samuel that it had been in those of Aaron; nay, it continued the same to the very end of their history. Whoever therefore had the charge of mediating with God on their behalf, must have been, to use the language of the text, one who could deal gently with the ignorant and erring. God made provision that it should be so, and St. Paul tells us what this provision was.

For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

The Lord might have appointed one of his attendant angels to be high-priest over his chosen people. But unconscious of infirmity himself, an angel could not have exercised patience with so wayward and sinful a congregation. He therefore appointed one of themselves, a "high-priest taken from among men," who being himself liable to sin and fall, might learn from this humbling experience, patience with his erring brethren. If we desire an example of this, let us look at Aaron, at his behaviour in the matter of the golden calf and at the waters of Meribah. In these transactions we discover a high-priest "compassed with infirmity," one who needing mercy for himself, was in circumstances fitted to teach him patience day by day with those among whom he ministered.

God took means to ensure this under the Mosaic law.

And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

The high-priest of the old economy was privileged with a nearness to God enjoyed by no other Israelite. This might have tempted him to forget himself; and instead of dealing

gently with his brethren, he might have despised or have been impatient with them. He was therefore forbidden to comprehend his sin, on the great day of atonement, in the general sin of the congregation; and was enjoined, as we have already seen, to present a sacrifice for himself and his house before presenting the people's offering. It is to this ordinance that the words before us refer. The purpose of it was to remind this honoured minister continually, that he was a man "compassed with infirmity," and to teach him that patience with others which was an essential requisite of his ministry.

St. Paul proceeds next to THE CALL of the Jewish high-priests.

And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

We need not enlarge upon this head. All who know anything of the old economy, are aware that God allowed no man to take to himself the honour of the priesthood. When Korah attempted to do so, the earth swallowed him; and his wicked associates were consumed.¹ Aaron was solemnly called. "Take thou unto thee," said God to Moses, "Aaron thy brother...that he may minister unto me in the priest's office."² He was also solemnly consecrated. For Moses took him by God's command, and in the sight of all the congregation put on him the holy garments, with the Urim and Thummin, and set the mitre on his head and anointed him with oil.³ And to put it beyond question that this call and consecration were of God, the princes of Israel laid up their rods by his command in the tabernacle of witness, along with the rod of Aaron. And the buds and blossoms and almonds which appeared on that rod in the morning, became, as God intended, his testimony to all coming generations, that Aaron and his family were his chosen priests.⁴

Those to whom St. Paul was writing, were well aware of

¹ Numb. xvi. 1—35.

² Exod. xxviii. 1.

³ Levit. viii. 1—12.

⁴ Numbers xvii. 1—10.

all these things. But his object was to teach them, through this medium, concerning Aaron's great antitype, their High-Priest above. We shall find accordingly, when we come to the next lecture, the spiritual meaning of all the typical circumstances which we have now been considering. But it will not at all anticipate our matter on that occasion, if we dwell for a little on them now. We shall therefore direct our attention, in what remains of the present lecture, to the functions of Christ in the temple above, and to his qualifications for his office of mercy, as these are set forth in the ministry of Aaron and his family.

The functions of the Jewish high-priests are full of instruction. It is a very common idea that Christ has obtained forgiveness for us simply by his death. But we have just learned from the legal sacrifices, that forgiveness was not obtained merely through the victim's death, but by the high-priest taking the blood and carrying it within the vail. And this was a type of the reality. For "Christ being come an High-Priest of good things to come,...neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood," has "entered in once into the holy place."¹ And in that holy place he abides, presenting the blood of his sacrifice to the Eternal Father. That sacrifice was slain for all, and is presented for those that trust in it, obtaining for them continually the remission of all trespasses. As an Israelite, when he saw the high-priest pass with the blood of the sacrifice into the holiest, felt assured that his sin was purged; so we who believe on Christ, knowing that he has passed with the blood of his own sacrifice into the heavens, rest in the assurance of forgiveness. This consideration throws great light on the nature of the Divine forgiveness. No act of man toward his fellow is a just illustration of it. The mercy of a king in pardoning a condemned criminal, which is the illustration chiefly resorted to, is exceedingly defective. In the first place, it is merely retrospective, and cannot reach to future breaches of the law. But this is not the character of God's forgiveness; if it were, that forgiveness would be of no

¹ Hebrews ix. 11, 12.

service to us, for we are continually offending the Lord and coming short of his glory. A king's pardon is in the second place, an act done in a moment. But the mercy which God vouchsafes in answer to the continual presentation of the blood of Christ on our behalf, is a continued act, forgiving sin as it is committed and covering transgression as it comes into view. It is this which makes our salvation sure while we trust in Christ unfeignedly. He cannot cease to plead for those who do so, and God cannot cease to hear him; "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And the same high-priest who presented Israel's sacrifices, presented their gifts also. We learned from the legal ordinances, that no man might present his own gift. We learned also that whilst any uncleanness attached to him, no man might present anything to God. Now the uncleanness of sin attaches by nature to us, and we have forfeited in consequence, the privilege of serving God. All the service therefore which we render, whether it be waiting on Him in his house, or ordering our families in his fear, giving our substance for his cause, or distributing it to the poor and necessitous, must pass through the hands of Christ, must be presented to the Father by that glorious High-Priest whose blood has purged our sins. And the pure and holy God of heaven will accept no offering, unless the offerer be cleansed and justified in the blood of his dear Son.

Do we desire then to be made partakers of the forgiveness of God? Let us flee for refuge to the blood which is even now being presented on high; it will plead for us. Do we desire to serve God?—do we desire that our services be accepted? The same High-Priest who obtains forgiveness for our sins, will obtain acceptance for our services. Let us present them in his name and trusting in his blood: they shall be "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."¹

Error can be discerned only when contrasted with truth. In the light of the truth therefore which we have now con-

¹ Hebrews vii. 25.² Phil. iv. 18.

sidered, let us direct your attention to two forms of error. The first is a very common form. If we serve God to the best of our ability, men say, he will accept our pious endeavours and graciously forgive our shortcomings. Now those who say so expect forgiveness as the reward of obedience, they hope that for the sake of their good actions their sins shall be passed over. But they never think of inquiring whether God will accept these good actions; they regard that as a point settled. It is settled indeed, but in the other way. The actions which in their eyes appear so good, the services which to them seem so meritorious, are the actions and services of sinners—aye of condemned sinners, and therefore cannot be received. A criminal sentenced to die may presume to send a present to his sovereign, but will his sovereign condescend to accept it? This question is easily answered; even the offer would be esteemed an insult. And shall the great God then accept from us any service, while we lie under the curse of unforgiven sin? No: obedience first and forgiveness afterwards is the order of self-righteous man; but forgiveness first and obedience afterwards is the order of the holy and righteous God. Let us not expect forgiveness then at the close of a life of well-doing; let us accept it now through the blood of Christ our Saviour. Then shall we indeed do well, and be rewarded in doing so with God's present and eternal approbation.

But there is another and a more dangerous form of error, which is also promulgated in public and high places. Men say that by his death Christ has obtained forgiveness for us, and that this forgiveness has been communicated in the act of baptism. But they add that by sin after baptism this grace is forfeited, and warn us that if this be our unhappy case, we may not fall back again on the unconditional mercy of the gospel, but recover ourselves, as best we may, by tears and penitence and fasting. It is impossible to conceive anything more poisonous than such teaching. It makes us our own saviours, for we have all sinned since our baptism. But let me show the bitter root of it: Christ's priesthood is set aside. His passion is indeed spoken

of, and the forgiveness of God is represented as vouchsafed to us thereby. But the appearance of the Saviour in the presence of God on behalf of his believing people is never spoken of, and the Divine forgiveness instead of being represented as a continuous and ever-repeated act, vouchsafed in answer to a continued intercession, is spoken of as an instantaneous act, done and finished in the celebration of an ordinance. How great is the difference between the comfortless darkness of error, and the comfortable light of truth! Some prodigal child of our Father in heaven, some baptized man who has lived for many years in forgetfulness of the holy name which is upon him, is at last convinced of his sin and folly and desires to become God's servant. He earnestly asks God's ministers what is required of him that he may obtain mercy. Shall we answer, you obtained mercy at your baptism, but you have lost it now; nothing remains but to recover yourself, as best you may, by penitence, mortification and fasting; these things may even yet procure the blessing which you seek? Ah, were we to do so, well might the inquirer turn from us exclaiming, "miserable comforters are ye all." But Christ bids us return a very different answer. And by his authority we say to the distressed prodigal, the blood which is even now being presented in the holiest above, was shed for you; put your trust in it and claim an interest in its advocacy, and the mercy of God is yours. But will the Saviour receive my name, he asks, will he become my advocate? He will, is our reply; hear his own word to the prodigals of the circumcision, the breakers of the old covenant, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."¹ And will my Father in heaven, he asks again, accept the services of one who has so long forgotten him? He will accept them, we answer, and with such joyful welcome that even the angels of glory shall tune their harps and sing. For the Highest shall proclaim through the shining ranks which surround him, "it is meet that we make merry; this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and his found."²

¹ John vi. 37.² Luke xv. 24, 32.

And if the functions of the Jewish high-priest as a type of the Saviour, are thus full of instruction, his qualifications in the same typical character are equally full of comfort. When we begin in earnest to serve the Lord, we become so conscious of the hardness of our hearts, our backwardness to learn God's will, and proneness to depart from his ways, that we are apt to sink in despondency. But in this state of feeling we are consoled by the assurance that Aaron's great Antitype is, in a far more eminent sense than was true of him, one who deals gently with "the ignorant and erring." How persevering was the ignorance of his disciples! After they had been long instructed in the spiritual nature of his kingdom, they disputed, almost in his presence, which among them, should be the greatest; and two of them asked that they might sit, one on his right hand and the other on his left hand, in his glory. After they had long followed his merciful footsteps, and seen it stamped on his every act, that he had come not to destroy men's lives but to save them, they sought to bring down fire from heaven, to consume the churlish Samaritans. When he told them that he should be slain and rise again, the saying was unwelcome to them all, and one of them presumed to rebuke him. And when at length he was slain, the dreadful event took them, notwithstanding all his warnings, at unawares, and their hopes were buried in his tomb: they heard of his resurrection, but refused to believe it. Such was their ignorance. It must have been provoking indeed when even Jesus felt constrained to say, "Oh fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"¹ But he never wearied of his task as their Instructor; he continued compassionately patient with them, till he had filled them with the knowledge of his will. And as they were ignorant, so they were prone, just as we are, to wander out of the way, and did wander out of it whenever they were left to themselves. Satan was permitted at the awful season of the crucifixion, to try his strength on them all, but especially on St. Peter. And the result was that they all forsook him, and that St. Peter with oaths and curses

¹ Luke xxiv. 25.

denied having seen his face. But all this was permitted that the gracious character of their heavenly High-Priest might appear. Jesus had compassion on his erring brethren. I have prayed for "thee," he said to Peter, "that thy faith fail not:"¹ and that prayer recovered the fallen one. Now we have to do with the same High-Priest. He is as merciful to our dulness of apprehension as he was to that of his disciples; and as compassionate, when by the violence of Satan and the force of temptation we at any time are driven from the way of God. Amid all our short-comings in love and continual failures in duty, let us be true-hearted with our Saviour, trusting in his mercy; and he on his part, will never weary of interceding for us above. He will also vouchsafe to us the same proof of Divine forgiveness which he vouchsafed to these disciples; our ignorance shall be removed by his heavenly teaching, our feeble goings shall be established in the way of his holy commandments.

We have seen already that the Jewish high-priest was taught compassionate patience with his brethren, by being himself "compassed with infirmity." And in so far as a sinless Being can prove the circumstances of the fallen, this is true of his great Antitype. The blessed Jesus had indeed no experience of our sinful propensities, but he had experience, while he dwelt on earth, of all those infirmities of which Satan takes advantage to lead us into sin. We saw in the last lecture, that in the awful conflict of the garden the tempter addressed these infirmities, that he might persuade him to disobey his Father. And we learned the precious and consoling truth that the remembrance of this, his own experience, makes our High-Priest pity us when we are assaulted by the same dreadful enemy. To impress this yet more, I will give a scriptural example of it, an example of Satan succeeding with the servant in *the very thing* which he had attempted in vain with the Master; and of the Master pitying the servant when he fell. The same hour of trial, arising from the common aversion of humanity to suffering and death, awaited Jesus and

¹ Luke xxii. 31, 32.

his servant Peter.* The master was aware of what was coming on them both, and warned the self-confident disciple.¹ Having done so, he entered Gethsemane, and St. Peter followed him. Jesus immediately betook himself to prayer. His disciple, in spite of repeated warnings, lost the precious moments in sinful sleep, Let us mark the result. The hour of darkness came. Jesus met it fresh from communion with his Father, and was borne through it in his Father's strength; but St. Peter, just awaked from sleep, was taken at unawares and at once thrown down. I have already referred to his dreadful fall, and need not dwell on it. Let us rather observe what followed. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Oh may we dare to translate that look into language? Guided by holy Scripture, I believe we may. It was methinks as if Jesus would have said—*hath he thrown thee down, my poor servant—the same malicious enemy who thrust sore at me that I might fall, and wrung from me that sweat of blood?—but be comforted, he shall not triumph, I will raise thee up again.* That look restored St. Peter. The sign of his recovery was a flood of penitential tears: "he went out, and wept bitterly."² Such was the benignant compassion towards his erring brethren of him who in the days of his flesh was compassed with our infirmity; and such it is still, though he is now exalted to glory. But we must take heed that we do not turn this grace of God into wantonness, taking encouragement from it in wilful sin. St. Peter's sin was not wilful: he fell through infirmity and by reason of sudden temptation; and he was raised up again. But Judas the traitor, who fell through love of sin, through deliberate, villainous intention, fell to rise no more and went to his own place. If then we desire to serve the Lord and mourn sincerely over our shortcomings, we may comfort ourselves in thinking of his mercy to St. Peter. But if we are disposed to esteem sin as a little matter, and to harden

¹ John xiii. 36—38.

² Luke xxii. 61, 62.

* Our Lord's trial was indeed incomparably the greater, for he had a peculiar reason for dreading death.

ourselves in the commission of it, let us think on the doom of Judas, and let us tremble!

I do not enter at present on the consideration of Christ's call to his priestly office, reserving that for the next lecture. Let me only remark that his having been called and appointed by the Father to execute the functions of high-priest on our behalf, conveys to us an additional assurance that the blood of his sacrifice shall be accepted, and that our gifts presented by his hand, shall not be rejected by heaven's Majesty. And it stamps an additional value on the blessing of a compassionate High-Priest, that he is the gift of a compassionate God. It is of all proofs the most affecting, that the Highest knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust.

These blessed truths, let us remember in conclusion, deeply interesting as they are to the understanding, far more so than the revelations of science, or the discoveries of art, have been revealed to us by God for a higher purpose, even to touch and melt our hearts. May he in his infinite mercy give them power to do so!

LECTURE III.

Hebrews v. 5—10.

"So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedec."

WE saw in the beginning of the last lecture, that from the fourteenth verse of the fourth chapter of this epistle, down to the tenth verse of the fifth chapter at which we have just stopped reading, is one unbroken sentence, and is divided into three distinct parts. St. Paul sets out by declaring Christ's priesthood in general terms, proceeds then to explain particularly the functions, qualifications, and call of the Jewish high-priests; and concludes in the verses which we have read now, by demonstrating that this Divine call, these qualifications, and these high and holy functions belong to, and are possessed by, their great antitype the Lord Jesus. Let me only remark further that the apostle has inverted the order of his discourse. In speaking of the Jewish priests, as we saw in the last lecture, he mentions their functions first, their qualifications second, and their call third. Whereas, in speaking of the Lord Jesus, as we shall see in the present lecture, he mentions his call first, his qualifica-

tions second, and his functions third. This makes of course, no difference so far as the argument is concerned ; but I notice it to throw light on the meaning of the passage. Let us now proceed to its exposition.

So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest ; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.

In these words we have Christ's CALL declared to us. "If I honour myself," said Jesus to the Jews, "my honour is nothing : it is my Father that honoureth me ; of whom ye say, that he is your God."¹ To the same effect spake St. Peter. "The God of our fathers," he said to Israel, "hath glorified his Son Jesus."² And such is also the testimony of St. Paul in his words now before us ; Christ took not on himself, he says, the glory of the priesthood ; the Father conferred it on him. It was incumbent on him to prove this statement ; and he does so in a way which to a Hebrew was demonstration, viz. by referring to the words of the Father concerning Christ recorded in Old Testament-Scripture. His first reference is to the second Psalm. Messiah, speaking in that Psalm by the mouth of David, says, "I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee : " and the Father speaking in the same Psalm, says of his acknowledged Son, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."³ There is indeed in these words, no mention of the priesthood ; but the Hebrews were perfectly aware, from the testimony of their prophets, that he who should inherit the kingdom, should inherit the priesthood also. They knew that Zechariah had written, "Behold the man whose name is The Branch...shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne."⁴ And they must therefore have been conscious that the inference of the apostle from the second Psalm, was perfectly legitimate and

¹ John viii. 54. ² Acts iii. 13. ³ Psalm ii. 6, 7. ⁴ Zech. vi. 12, 13.

conclusive. But lest his argument might appear in any way defective, he strengthens it by a reference to the hundred and tenth Psalm. In that Psalm we have Christ's priesthood declared in express terms; the Father announces from his throne, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec."¹ And Melchizedec, be it further observed, was, as the Hebrews well knew, both a king and a priest. This circumstance is most important, for it unites in one the testimony which these two Psalms bear to Christ, plainly shewing that in his person he was to gather up this twofold honour. Now the priesthood of Christ was, as we shall see more fully in the next lecture, the very point of doctrine which the Hebrew Church was so slow to receive. But no Hebrew could resist the force of an argument like this. And St. Paul, therefore, in placing these two citations side by side, discovers admirable knowledge of the feelings of those to whom he was writing, and an ability in reasoning out of the Scriptures, worthy of an inspired apostle.

It is impossible to leave these verses without observing the testimony which they bear to the exceeding glory and dignity of Christ's sacerdotal office. How great must be the dignity, how immeasurable the glory of that office which even the Son of God put not forth his own hand to assume! These verses tell us moreover that it was conferred on him as the reward of his passion. The expression "to be made an high-priest," taken with its connection, marks this in a very striking manner. We remember a similar expression, "being made so much better than the angels."² We saw, in considering these words, that they denoted conferred dignity, and that the pre-eminence over angels of which they spoke, was the reward of the Mediator's work. And the same thing is true of the words before us. Taken along with the declaration which precedes them, that Christ glorified not himself, they denote, in the most emphatic manner, a dignity conferred by another. This dignity was conferred, according to the text, when the Father said to him, "thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." And

¹ Psalm cx. 4.² Hebrews i. 4.

we have the authority of St. Paul for saying that this "to-day" was the day of Christ's resurrection,—that God addressed him in these words when he begat him from the womb of the grave, and clothed him with immortality.¹ The other citation perfectly corresponds with this. For the words "Thou art a priest for ever," were addressed by God to his risen and ascended Son, at the moment when he said to him, "Sit thou on my right hand."² Both these declarations then being subsequent to his resurrection, mark his priesthood as the reward of his finished work. He was indeed from the beginning, the predestinate Christ, and as such, interceded for his people. But it was not till he had passed through death and risen again, that the Son of God and Man was solemnly installed as priest for ever, and entered on the full discharge of the functions of his holy office. If then we would know the dignity and glory of this office, let us measure it by the bitterness of the passion which went before. Let us go to Gethsemane and behold him in his agony, "sore amazed and very heavy." Let us go from thence to Calvary, and listen to his piteous lamentations, to his mournful cries. Let us behold him when he could lament, when he could cry no longer; when he sank from the bloody tree a load of unconscious clay in the arms of Nicodemus and of Joseph, and was laid a dead man in the cold and silent grave. Let us remember that these were the sufferings and that this was the death of the Son of the Highest, and that their value in the sight of God availed to the redemption of the world. And let us then judge how great must be the glory, how inconceivable the dignity of that priesthood which has been deemed by him the adequate reward of such a sufferer, the adequate recompense of such a passion!

St. Paul proceeds to declare THE QUALIFICATIONS of this Divinely called High-Priest.

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto

¹ Acts xiii. 33.

² Psalm cx. 1.

him that was able to save him OUT OF DEATH, and was DELIVERED FROM THAT WHICH HE FEARED. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.

There cannot be a doubt that St. Paul's object in these words is to present Christ before us as the antitype of the Jewish high-priest; these prayers and supplications, this strong crying and tears, and this learning of obedience by suffering, being the most conclusive of all evidences that our blessed Saviour was himself once compassed with infirmity. But there is an apparent confusion in the Apostle's reasoning on this point which it is needful to remove. The infirmity of which he speaks in the fifteenth verse of the former chapter, and to which he refers again in the words before us, is, it may be said, the sinless weakness of our nature. Whereas the infirmity with which the Jewish high-priest was compassed, to which reference is made in the second verse of this chapter, was something more, viz. man's common liability to sin and wander from the ways of God. And what analogy can there be, it may be asked, between these two cases; between a sinful son of Aaron, and our sinless High-Priest above? To reason in this way however, is to misunderstand the apostle's meaning. He is not speaking of different kinds of infirmity. The radical meaning of the word *infirmity* in these two places is the same, viz. the weakness incident to and inseparable from humanity. The difference between the Jewish high-priests and their great Antitype consisted, not in their being compassed with different kinds of infirmity, but in the same infirmity being found in different moral subjects. For that weakness which in a sinless being is simply the occasion of temptation, renders a sinful being liable to transgress and fall. This is just the representation of the matter which St. Paul himself gives. The sinless Jesus, he says, having taken our infirmity, was tempted in consequence, in all points like as we are; high-priests taken from among sinful men, he adds, being themselves compassed with infirmity, were enjoined to offer sacrifices for their own sins, as well as for the people's.

The Jew then, it may be said, had an advantage over us; his high-priest, having actually fallen into his sins, could more perfectly sympathize with him when ignorant and erring. This objection occurs to every one who thinks deeply on the subject, and must not be lightly passed by. What is the sympathy which the sinful need? Is it sympathy with them in their sins? No; it is holy sympathy, i. e. the sympathy of one who pities them in their bondage and helps them to break their chains. Now it is needless to say that a sinful high-priest must have been deficient in such sympathy. The pollution of sin in his own heart must have prevented him from hating it and pitying its victims as he ought; perfect love also and perfect patience with the offending, never could have been found in a sinful bosom. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault," says St. Paul, "ye (not who have sinned the most, but) which are spiritual," i. e. have most of the mind of God, and have proved most of the blessedness of his ways, "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." But perfection of holiness, patience, and love excludes, it may be said, the possibility of fellow-feeling with the sinful. It does not exclude it: there is no need of our High-Priest having fallen into our sins, to enable him to sympathize with us: it is necessary only that he should have proved the power of our temptations. And St. Paul therefore adds in the text just cited, "considering thyself, (not, how often thou hast fallen, but) lest thou also be tempted."¹ If one therefore can be found who has proved to the uttermost the temptations of the sinful, and yet is "without sin," such an one will be a perfect high-priest. I need not add that these qualifications meet in Jesus: if he corresponds not in all things with Aaron his type, it is only because as the Son of God, He is infinitely Aaron's superior.

Let me refer for a moment, in proof of this, to the personal experience of Aaron and of Christ. Aaron in the matter of the golden calf, if we judge from the inspired account of the transaction, and from his own account of it, seems to have sinned through infirmity; he was afraid

¹ Galatians vi. 1.

probably of being stoned if he had withstood the madness of the people.¹ His great antitype passed through a far more fearful experience in Gethsemane; he was exposed to the fury not of men but of devils, whose malice made trial to the uttermost what apprehension and fear could effect on the sensitive and shrinking mind. We have thus a most apposite illustration of the statements made above. The weakness incident to humanity surprised the sinful high-priest into sin, whilst it exposed the sinless to the inroads of dark temptation. Now let us suppose that an Israelite who had been overtaken in a fault through the impulse of sudden and overwhelming fear, had been brought before the father of the Jewish priesthood. *I cannot be severe on you, Aaron would have said, I fell myself when tempted in like manner.* Jesus indeed cannot say so; but let us mark what he can say. St. Peter was in these very circumstances; he fell before a temptation which wrung from his Master's a sweat of blood, and "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." I have already attempted to explain that look. *I have proved, it said, the power of that temptation before which thou hast fallen, and will not leave thee in the dust.* The sympathy was *as perfect* in the latter case as it could have been in the former; and yet it was *holy* sympathy. The fallen Apostle found also in the Christian High-Priest what he never could have found in the High-Priest of his own nation, a bosom of perfect love, patience and forgiving kindness, to fall back upon in his time of need.

Let us now enter on the reverent consideration of those sufferings of our Lord Jesus, to which allusion is here made. He offered, St. Paul tells us, in the days of his flesh, prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. These supplications, he further tells us, were directed to him who was able to save him; the object of them was to be saved out of death; and in this he was heard, being delivered from that which he feared. This sentence has occasioned the greatest possible difficulty to all students of holy Scripture, because the authorized version has been followed. St. Paul

¹ Exodus xxxii. 1, 2, 22—24.

is generally understood to be referring here to the prayers of Gethsemane. On that occasion, it is said, Christ prayed to be saved *from death*, for he asked that the cup might pass from him. But it is an insuperable objection to this interpretation, that in this prayer he was not heard; the cup did not pass from him. To get rid of this difficulty it has been suggested that in one sense he was heard, being supported in the prospect of death by an angel sent to him from heaven. But this is not an honest interpretation of holy Scripture. To be saved from death, cannot mean to be supported in the prospect of dying. The whole difficulty vanishes, and we are presented instead with a fulness of blessed meaning, when we adopt the emendation suggested above. Prayer *to be saved out of death*, is prayer *to be raised from the dead*. The mercy of resurrection was with Jesus a matter of positive promise, and the fulfilment of this promise, the Apostle here means to tell us, was the object of these prayers and supplications, this strong crying and tears. But where, it may be asked, in the record of Christ's life as given by the evangelists, do we find any record of such prayers and tears? We do not find it in any of them: but this need not surprise us, for there is no reference to the New Testament in this entire epistle, every thing contained in it being proved from the Hebrew Scriptures. The Book of Psalms was in St. Paul's mind as he penned the words of the text; he has already proved Christ's divine call to be High-Priest by two citations from it. And we shall find in the same book what he refers to now. It has been well called "the Redeemer's prayer-book." If we would acquaint ourselves with Christ indeed, we must give our days and nights to the study of that precious Scripture. The evangelists record his life, but it lays bare his very heart: they mention the fact of his being given to prayer, but it leads us into his closet and gives us to hear his very words. And these his secret devotions discover a Saviour who fully participated in all the sinless frailties of humanity, who intuitively shrank from every form of suffering, and to whom that hour of nature's agony which has been emphatically called the king of terrors,

was a peculiar object of dread. He had a peculiar reason for this dread. Death came to him as God's penal infliction on sin, the expression of the Divine curse. How fearful are these words of Moses, "he that is hanged is accursed of God!"¹ And yet St. Paul tells us that they were fulfilled in his sacred person when he died on the bloody tree.² Dare we then to attempt conceiving his feelings in the prospect of enduring this curse, in the prospect of dying as its conscious object, and of descending under it, into the darkness of the grave? Nor was this all. He died under the hand of Satan through the instrumentality of wicked men. For the prince of death had power to kill him because he stood as the substitute of sinners. We learn this from his own words. "This is your hour," he said to the multitudes who came to take him in the garden, "and the power of darkness."³ And we also learn from himself how much this aggravated the bitterness of death. For as we stand by his cross, we hear him exclaim "Save me from the lion's mouth."⁴ These considerations duly weighed, at once explain to us why the text calls death emphatically "that which he feared," and prepare us to understand those prayers and supplications, that strong crying and tears, of which it makes mention. For they were addressed to him who was able to lift him by resurrection, from under this dreadful curse, to rid him out of the hand of this hateful enemy, and to comfort him, in the light of immortality, with the consolations of his eternal love. He prays in the sixth Psalm, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak...Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake!" Here is a prayer to One "who was able to save him." And if we ask from what he desired salvation, we have our answer in the words that follow; "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?... All the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch

¹ Deuteronomy xxi. 23.² Galat. iii. 13.³ Luke xxii. 53.⁴ Psalm xxii. 21; 1 Peter v. 8.

with my tears." Tears then mingled with this prayer. Let us compare the text with this language and mark their wonderful agreement. Again, in the thirtieth Psalm the Saviour addresses the Father, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled: I cried to thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?" Now the pit is the grave, and the mercy which is implored in this supplication is evidently resurrection from the dust of death. Let us compare this Psalm also with the text; there is a wonderful harmony between them. But besides prayers, tears and supplications, the text mentions "strong crying,"—"the voice raised high by the earnestness of agonizing entreaty." Let us refer therefore, in addition, to the eighty-eighth Psalm which Bishop Horsley entitles "the lamentation of Messiah." "O Lord God of my salvation," he exclaims, "I have cried day and night before thee: let my prayer come before thee, incline thine ear unto my cry; for my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave... Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves." I need not remark that this "strong crying" is the language of One on whose spirit the wrath of God was pressing, and who was distinctly conscious that it would continue to press on him till it had sunk him as low as the grave. Under this distressing consciousness, he asks the eternal Father, "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" These questions imply no doubt of the Father's ability or faithfulness; they only express in the most striking possible manner the greatness of the mercy which Messiah was then imploring, a mercy so vast and so amazing that Divine power alone was competent to bestow it. And Jesus knew that Divine power would bestow it, for he adds immediately, "But

unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee." It was so: these questions were all answered affirmatively, these impossible things were all brought to pass on the morning of the third day. These wonderful Psalms completely elucidate the Apostolic sentence before us. They verify the statement which has just been made, that Christ dreaded death as the expression of penal wrath; and establish the declaration here made by St. Paul, that the mercy of resurrection, though pledged to him in the Father's faithfulness, was obtained, like all the Divine promises, through prayer and supplication, through strong crying and tears.

The text goes on to tell us that through this discipline of suffering, Christ "learned obedience." These words have occasioned as much difficulty as those which we have just been considering. For to speak of Jesus learning anything, appears to many, to be dishonouring to his Godhead. But by attending to the evident purpose of St. Paul, we shall at once get rid of this difficulty. He does not mean that the Son of God needed to acquire any information concerning either suffering or obedience. He means that before Christ was exalted as the Saviour of a suffering Church, and the Master of a people who were to obey his voice, it pleased God that by passing through the discipline of suffering he should himself prove experimentally what it was to obey another. Fellow-feeling with those whom he is leading through present sorrow to future glory, is according to the doctrine of this epistle, an essential requisite of the High-Priest of the Church. And this can be found only in a Saviour who has himself been in the circumstances and proved the trials of the saved.

Christ learned this obedience, we are told, "by the things which he suffered." In professing ourselves willing to obey God's voice, we often know not what we say. When Abraham received the promised child into his arms, he might have said in the fulness of his heart, What doth the Lord require of me?—let him speak, for his servant heareth. But the same Abraham, as he travelled to Mount Moriah

with that favoured child in one hand and the fire and knife in the other, learned in the school of suffering that obedience was a very serious thing. And I understand the meaning of the text to be that it was thus with our Lord himself, that he learned "by the things which he suffered" this indispensable but solemn lesson. "I came down from heaven," said the blessed Jesus, "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."¹ That will was to the last degree grievous to flesh and blood. It appointed his earthly lot to be one of ignominy, pain and sorrow, leaving him exposed to the violence of the wicked, and the constant assaults of Satan. And it appointed this course of suffering to have its end in a death of shame. A cross and a bloody grave, the curse of God and the malediction of man, were to be the only recompense in this world, of a life of spotless obedience and unexampled love. Such was the path which the Father marked out for Jesus; such was the path which without a murmur the obedient Son pursued. And every step which he took in it was one of increased and increasing suffering, his day growing darker and darker as it approached its evening. We learn this from his own mouth. When his passion was yet comparatively far off, we find him calmly shewing to his disciples that "he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things...and be killed."² When it approached nearer, we find him saying, "Now is my soul troubled."³ And on the eve of it, while he waited in Gethsemane for the expected traitor, we behold him on his bended knees, praying "that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him."⁴ Still, though nature bled at every pore, Jesus turned not aside till the whole will of God was accomplished in him. And having then learned obedience in the school of suffering, he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.

Christ was subjected to this discipline, we are further told, "though he were a Son." His path was not strewn with flowers because of his relation to the Eternal Father, and

¹ John vi. 38.² Matthew xvi. 21.³ John xii. 27.⁴ Mark xiv. 35.

tender estimation in his sight. The eternal Son of the Lord of Heaven and Earth found no royal road to-obedience. The Father did not say of Abraham, Moses or Elijah, let them pass through suffering, but let my Son be spared. No; the Son was to be pre-eminent in glory and dignity; and he was therefore pre-eminent also in suffering, toil, and shame.

Need I repeat, that in all this we discover a Saviour compassed with infirmity? The Hebrews might have said, we know that the Saviour passed through suffering and death; but what were suffering and death to him? Just what they are to you, is the answer of St. Paul, as you may learn from your own Scriptures. And if he appoints to you at present, reproach and persecution as the recompense of doing his will, do not therefore suppose that he is a cruel Master; for he knows what you are able to bear and feels for you most tenderly. He passed through your very experience in doing the will of another; and though now exalted to glory, he remembers "the days of his flesh." These lessons are for us as much as for the Hebrews. There is no truth which we are so apt to forget as the tempted manhood of our Lord. And yet none of the mysteries of our religion is so fitted to comfort in sorrow, to cheer in despondency, and to strengthen the fainting heart in the path of obedience and duty.

St. Paul proceeds finally, to declare to us THE FUNCTIONS of this Divinely called and thoroughly qualified High-Priest.

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him: called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedec.

We need not dwell long on this head, for its contents have been already to a great extent anticipated. The phrase "being made perfect," signifies being exalted to glory. The glory of the authorship of salvation, the glory of the Melchizedec priesthood. And this, let us observe, confirms what has been already stated, viz., that this priesthood is a conferred dignity, that the fulness of it

was bestowed after the Saviour's resurrection, and that its glory is to be measured by the bitterness of his passion. For the expressions, "he became the author of salvation," and "called of God an High-Priest," both mark conferred dignity. We are also told that he was made perfect after he had learned obedience through suffering, and had been delivered from death, the object of his fear. And finally, this declaration of his glory immediately after such explicit reference to his bitter passion, very strikingly marks the one as the decreed reward of the other. It was a meet reward. Most fit it was that he who had died for man, should be made the author of man's salvation! It was a reward indeed which a heart of love could alone appreciate. Jesus therefore could appreciate it: if he had not possessed such a heart, his bitter passion had never been. For this "joy set before him, He endured the cross;"¹ love esteemed it "all joy" to be enabled to save and bless.

The purpose of St. Paul in these two verses, has been somewhat misunderstood, and the meaning of the text has been in consequence obscured. From his again repeating "called of God an High-Priest," it has been supposed that he is returning to the subject of Christ's call. But he has already declared this fully, and no writer, sacred or profane, is less given to return on his words. These two verses are a continuation, and an essential part of his argument. He means to tell us, following out the type, that Christ is the author of salvation, as God's called High-Priest; i.e. that he saves us on earth by executing in heaven on our behalf, the functions of the priestly office. Let us now therefore, applying the type for ourselves, consider what these functions are.

Salvation, the authorship of which is here ascribed to Christ, is both a present and a future blessing. As a present blessing, it is the forgiveness of sin, acceptance for ourselves and our services before the eternal Father, and gracious preservation by the power of the Holy Ghost, from the subtleties and violence of the devil. Of this Christ is

¹ Hebrews xii. 2.

the author "to all them that obey him," i. e. that hearken to his voice and trust in him. He obtains their pardon by presenting his blood in the holiest, according as it is written, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father."¹ By presenting the same blood he obtains acceptance for them and their services; by him "we have access," says St. Paul, "into this grace wherein we stand."² The Christian poet has expressed this in the most beautiful and touching manner. Having spoken of his acts of obedience, and their worthlessness considered in themselves, he adds,

"But in the robe which Christ did spin,
They are of great and high request;
They find acceptance, wrapped within
My elder brother's bloody vest."

Christ's eye moreover is on his people in the dark hour of temptation, and in answer to his prevalent intercession, the help of the Holy Ghost is ministered to them from the throne. For Christ as Aaron's antitype blesses the Israel of God with Aaron's priestly blessing. The Jewish high-priest was commanded to lift up his hands and say, "the Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." And this was no idle form; he who commanded him to pronounce these words over Israel, added "I will bless them."³ Those hands of our heavenly High-Priest in like manner, which are lifted to the eternal Father on our behalf continually, are lifted also over us who obey him, blessing us in the Father's name. And if even Aaron's blessing was no form, the blessing of Jesus must be full of reality. It brings down into our hearts the peace of forgiven sin; it gives to us the assurance of Divine acceptance, enabling us to walk in the light of our Father's countenance; it graciously preserves us from every evil work, and keeps us safe amid all the wiles, and against all the power of the enemy.

¹ 1 John ii. 1.

² Romans v. 2.

³ Numbers vi. 25—27.

It is not in our selfish hearts to conceive the joy of the tender-hearted Saviour in these blessed functions of his office. The experience of "the days of his flesh" is rewarded in this joy. He knows the power of that wrath from which his intercession shields his people; for he declares in the eighty-eighth Psalm, "while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." He knows the value of that favour which in Him is secured to them for ever, for again we hear him saying, during his sojourn in this "dry and thirsty land," "because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." And he knows the power and subtlety of that dreadful enemy against whom he is ever protecting them. Need I speak again of Gethsemane—of the Saviour's bloody sweat, St. Peter's shameful fall and the Saviour's restoring look? Oh, who shall describe that look! —the expression of those eyes of dovelike tenderness, when fresh from the experience of his own infirmity, he bent them on his fallen servant! And remembrance of that infirmity gives to these eyes, the same expression still. Bent now on his troubled and fallen people, they beam with that compassionate benignity which rejoices to help them in their hour of need.

But salvation is also a future blessing, as St. Paul shews by his language in the text, for he calls it "eternal salvation." "The God of peace," he says to the Romans, "shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."¹ "He that believeth on me," said our blessed Lord to the Jews, "hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."² "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work," says St. Paul again to Timothy, "and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom."³ In these things "eternal salvation" consists. And when Christ performs these things, crushing Satan under the feet of his saints, raising also these saints from their graves, and giving to them an entrance into his eternal kingdom, he shall be known as its glorious Author. He is the Author of this salvation "to all them that obey him." It is very striking to compare this state-

¹ Psalm lxxiii. 3. ² Romans xvi. 20. ³ John vi. 47, 54. ⁴ II Tim. iv. 18.

ment with the preceding part of the text. St. Paul has just told us that Christ in the days of his flesh offered prayers and supplications to him who was able to SAVE HIM out of death, and that he was heard LEARNING OBEDIENCE. And now he tells us that he has become the Author OF SALVATION to them that OBEY HIM. It is impossible to avoid observing the obviously-intended parallel. Just as surely as Jesus, by hearkening to the Father's voice and trusting in him, was delivered out of the dust of death, and made to triumph over Satan and exalted to immortality; so surely shall we, hearkening to our Saviour's voice and making him our confidence, be delivered from the power of the grave, and behold Satan crushed beneath our feet, and enjoy eternal life in the kingdom of our God. The faithfulness of the Father to Christ is the pledge of Christ's faithfulness to us. Most blessed, most consoling thought! Finally, Christ is the Author of this eternal salvation as "High-Priest after the order of Melchizedec," i.e. in virtue of his twofold office as King and Priest of God. His kingly power shall bruise the destroyer's head, shall spoil the grave, shall raise his believing ones to the possession of eternal life. For the King knows who they are who have fled for refuge to the High-Priest's mercy, and it is therefore on their behalf that he shall perform these acts of power. And in virtue of the same twofold office he shall pronounce over their heads, in the sight of assembled worlds, THE PRIESTLY BLESSING from THE THRONE. "When the Son of Man," he himself declares, "shall come in his glory," and "before him shall be gathered all nations," "then shall THE KING say unto them on his right hand, Come, YE BLESSED...inherit the kingdom prepared for you."¹ Then shall eternal salvation be revealed in all its fulness; for the righteous, in the power of that blessing, shall go into life eternal, shining forth "as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."²

May the Holy Spirit impress these precious truths on our hearts! They roll back the vail which hides the invisible world, and open to the view of those who trust in God what

¹ Matt. xxv. 31—34.

² Matt. xiii. 43.

is passing there. They discover to them the Father who fills that vast unseen, and the Brother who appears for them before his face. They reveal also the coming eternity, giving them to behold, with the eye of faith, the kingdom which is prepared for them that love him. May such faith, such hope be ours! Then shall he of whom we have now been speaking, be our comfort in life, our peace in death, and our exceeding joy throughout eternal ages. Which may God of his infinite mercy grant!

See Appendix, Note D.

LECTURE IV.

Hebrews v. 11—14. vi. 1—3.

(DIGRESSION.)

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit."

THE apostle, as has been already remarked, pauses here in his argument, to warn and exhort the Hebrews. He continues in this strain to the end of the sixth chapter, but with the opening of the seventh the argument is resumed. We cannot do justice either to the purpose or import of this digression, without understanding something of the state of those to whom St. Paul was writing. They had been able, as he tells us in the verses which we have just read, to receive the principles of the doctrine of Christ; but there was a point at which they stood still. They had repented of their dead works; they had believed in him who had sent Jesus to save them; they had understood the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands; they hoped for resurrec-

tion from the dead, and looked for the eternal judgment: and so far all was well. But they found it very hard to believe that the heaven-appointed sacrifices, the imposing ritual, and the gorgeous priesthood, to which they had been accustomed under the law, had never, even from their first institution, been anything but shadows. And they found it harder still to believe that because the substance had come, these shadows had fled away. They could not bear to hear that God had now no occasion for the services of the legal high-priest; that his sacrifices and his incense were alike without avail; and that in Jesus alone, as at once sacrifice and priest, acceptance with God was to be found. For though believing in that sacrifice and loving him as their Saviour, they could not divest themselves of confidence in those rites to which they had been accustomed, and in the intercession of that priesthood which from infancy they had been taught to venerate.

These preliminary remarks, shewing the state in which the Hebrew Churches then were, will enable us to understand the verses which form our text. I have spoken, says St. Paul, of the Son of God as High-Priest after the order of Melchizedec. On this subject I have many things to say, but they are hard to be uttered, not because of their difficulty, but because of your inaptitude to learn. This inaptitude is the more melancholy, because considering the time that you have been learners of the Christian faith, you ought now to be able to instruct others in it. But so far is this from being the case, that you have need to be taught over again what are the elementary principles of the oracles of God: we must feed you with milk, because, like babes, you cannot digest strong meat. For every one who stops short at this elementary instruction, and is contented with such partial knowledge of the word of justification and salvation, deserves no other name than a babe. The matured Christian on the other hand, who by frequent exercise of his mind on the mysteries of the faith can discern truth from error, and is prepared to receive the one and to reject the other, seeks deeper instruction, and will not be contented

without it. Seeing then that this is the case, continues the apostle, let us leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on to perfection. I cannot be always teaching, and you must not be always learning, about repentance from dead works and faith toward God, about baptisms and imposition of hands, about resurrection and eternal judgment: for in all these points you have been fully instructed already. We shall therefore, with God's permission, advance to higher and deeper things.

These higher and deeper things, as we shall see when St. Paul comes to their exposition, were Christ's Melchizedec-priesthood, and his functions in the temple above. He calls them "the perfection," because the knowledge and faith of them is absolutely necessary to make the worshipper "perfect as pertaining to the conscience,"¹ i. e. to impart to him perfect peace with God. And for the same reason he tells the Hebrews that in being ignorant of them, they were unskilled "in the word of righteousness," i. e. in the way of justification and acceptance. Nor is this all. In calling those things in which they had already been instructed "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," and "the foundation" on which this superstructure of matured knowledge was to be builded, he plainly shews that simple as they were, they contained the elements of those higher truths to which he desired to conduct them. And finally, in telling the Hebrews that they needed to be instructed in these first principles "again," he as plainly shews that had they understood even the elements of Christianity aright, they would have been led to receive the very truths at which they were now stumbling. And it is most true. A thorough comprehension even of the first principles of the oracles of God, would have proved to them the utter inefficacy of the legal sacrifices and the worthlessness of mere human mediation; and in proving this, it would have demonstrated the necessity of these shadows being swallowed up and done away in Christ the glorious substance.

Having thus endeavoured to explain the meaning of the

¹ Hebrews ix. 9.

text, so far as the Hebrews were concerned, let me now shew from its contents what, in the judgment of an inspired apostle, are the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and what is that matured knowledge of him which is necessary for Christian men, if God is to be glorified in his Church.

These principles, which are six in number, have a most remarkable connection together, and contain, when summed up in one, an astonishing fulness of truth, elementary though it be. For our better understanding of them, let us observe that they are in pairs. Repentance and faith are linked together, for there can be no repentance without faith, nor faith without repentance. Baptism and laying on of hands are also linked, for there was no baptism in St. Paul's days without laying on of hands, nor laying on of hands without baptism. And resurrection and judgment are linked, for resurrection is to judgment, and there can be no judgment without resurrection. The first pair concerns us as individuals; the second, as members of God's Church in this world; the third, as creatures destined to live for ever in the world to come. Such is their general import. We shall now proceed to consider them one by one.

"Repentance from dead works" comes first in order. The expression "dead works" is capable of two explanations. It may signify sinful works, for St. James says that "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death;"¹ and St. Paul tells us that "the wages of sin is death."² Or it may signify works done without the principle of life; referring to the nature of sin rather than to its effects. The principle which ought to animate us in all that we do, is love to God and desire for his glory. But sin closes the heart against God, and where this is the case, this living principle is wanting, and our works in consequence are dead. They may indeed be outwardly beautiful, but they cannot please God. The beautiful features and well-turned limbs of the dead cannot please us; we turn from the sight with loathing, because life is wanting. And even so does God turn away from the outwardly good actions of the man in whose heart

¹ James i. 15.

² Romans vi. 23.

his love is not dwelling: it is in his eyes the beauty of the dead. "Though I bestow all my goods," says St. Paul, "to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."¹ And the Church therefore teaches us to ask that God would pour into our hearts "that most excellent gift of charity, without which," we are instructed to say, "whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee."² "Repentance from dead works" then, viewed in both these aspects, is ceasing from sin, and ceasing to mock God with a service in which the heart is not. And that he calls on us to do this, is the first lesson of Christianity.

But how is this to be done? By "faith toward God," which is the second lesson. For if a man has long been the servant of sin, how is he to be taught to hate and forsake it? Or, if his heart has long been destitute of the love of God, how is that love to be implanted? Can the fear of hell teach genuine hatred of sin? Can the hope of heaven implant in the heart the genuine love of God? No; such fear and such hope, may lead those who are influenced by them, to pretend to an experience which they never knew; but further they cannot go. Love can only produce its own likeness. "We love him," says St. John, "because he first loved us."³ We know that he hath loved us, because it is declared in the holy gospel that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."⁴ And believing this gospel is "faith toward God." This faith therefore teaches repentance; believing in God's love to us, we learn to love him again, and to turn from all that is displeasing in his sight with the abhorrence which love inspires. Let us observe then the connection between the two first lessons of Christianity. The first cannot be learnt without the second; the second cannot be learnt without, in the very nature of things, engraving the first upon the heart. Reduced into one, these lessons declare God's will concerning us as individuals. They tell us that if we would

¹ I Cor. xiii. 3.

² Collect for Quinquagesima Sunday.

³ I John iv. 19.

⁴ John iii. 16.

please him now and see his face hereafter, we must believe in his love in Christ Jesus, and be constrained by the power of the holy affection which it produces, to forsake sin and to walk in his blessed ways. This is the beginning of the principles of the doctrine of Christ, the first letter of the Christian alphabet.

"The doctrine of baptisms" comes next in order. St. Paul does not say baptism, but baptisms, for the Hebrews were acquainted with two, viz. that of St. John Baptist, and that of Christ; and many of them had received both. "The doctrine" of these baptisms means the thing taught by them, their import, their significancy. It is not difficult to ascertain this. St. Paul tells us that St. John "baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people, that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus." The doctrine therefore of his baptism was "repentance from dead works, and faith toward God." And he enrolled those who received his words, among the expectant disciples of the Saviour. But the baptism of Christ, while comprehending this repentance and faith, went a great deal further. The Saviour had come, had risen, had died, had ascended, and had poured down the Holy Ghost before it was administered. And those who believed on him were received by that rite into the membership of the Church "which his body,"* partaking through union with that body, of the fatherly love and mercy which rested on it, and of the spirit of life which had descended from on high to animate it. "Repent and be baptized every one of you," said St. Peter, "in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost:" and "they," it is added, "that gladly received his word, were baptized."† This then, is "the doctrine" of Christian baptism. It is the seal of the new covenant, assuring us of the forgiveness of God, and of the gift of the Holy Ghost. We may indeed reject this forgiveness; we may grieve and quench this blessed Spirit, and so may finally perish. But this does not disprove the doctrine which I have just laid down.

1 Acts xix. 4.

2 Ephes. i. 23.

3 Acts ii. 38, 41.

"Behold," says St. Paul, reasoning with the baptized Gentile from God's dealings with the circumcised Jew, "the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."¹ The baptized shall perish as the circumcised did, by not abiding in the goodness of God. His goodness appears in the remission of sin and in the Holy Spirit, both freely bestowed on us in Christ. And for these inestimable benefits we are for ever responsible to the giver.

With the doctrine of baptisms the text conjoins "laying on of hands." St. Paul and his brethren the apostles, laid on hands for two separate and distinct purposes. They laid on hands in ordination, conferring by the same act authority and ability to minister. We read that before the seven deacons of the early Hebrew Church entered on the functions of their office, the congregation set them "before the apostles," who "when they had prayed, laid their hands on them."² And St. Paul writes to Timothy, "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."³ No emblem could be more significant. It was a standing sign to the Church that the authority and ability of her ministers both proceeded from above. But the apostles laid on their hands also on all the congregation, that they might communicate the Holy Ghost. We read that when "Samaria had received the word of God," St. Peter and St. John went down to them, and prayed "that they might receive the Holy Ghost." And having prayed, "they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."⁴ And we also read that St. Paul when at Ephesus, found certain disciples, and that when he "had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them."⁵ These two apostolic acts are worthy of separate and particular consideration. This consideration we shall now endeavour to bestow.

God is the source of all authority, and the fountain of all grace. When his Son appeared in the world, he bore

¹ Roman xi. 32.

² Acts vi. 6.

³ II Timothy i. 6.

⁴ Acts viii. 14—17.

⁵ Acts xix. 6.

his Father's commission. "The works that I do in my Father's name," he said, "they bear witness of me."¹ And his Father's Spirit rested on him, for he "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all."² He gave this commission to his apostles; "as my Father hath sent me," he said, "even so send I you." And he imparted this grace along with it; "he breathed on them," and said, "receive ye the Holy Ghost."³ They gave the same commission, as we have seen, and imparted the same grace to those whom they ordained. And aware that they could not be always with the Church, they made provision that after their decease, her Bishops, as the ministry next in order, should continue the exercise of this holy function. We find St. Paul authorizing Titus in Crete to "ordain elders in every city,"⁴ and charging Timothy in Ephesus, "the things that thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."⁵ And by this provision, the holy ministry of Christ has been preserved from generation to generation even to our own day. Its authority has indeed in ages past been fearfully abused, and its grace turned into gall and wormwood by the desperate wickedness of the heart of man. But, blessed be God, because Jesus lives on high, this authority and this grace exist still in all their freshness; and those who desire to serve him in his Church may yet receive both, through the channels which he has appointed. This then is the first part of "the doctrine of the laying on of hands." And from St. Paul reckoning it among the principles of the doctrine of Christ, we are to understand it as an unalterable Canon of the Church of the living God, that her ministry is at once heaven-appointed and heaven-endowed. I am aware that this doctrine is exceedingly unpalatable to the taste of the present day. Why may I not take on myself the office of the ministry?—is the question of every self-confident and half-instructed man. Because Christ your Saviour did not do so, is our

¹ John x. 25.² Luke iv. 14, 15.³ John xx. 21, 22.⁴ Titus i. 5.⁵ II Tim. ii. 2.

answer. His ministry in this world, and his ministry in glory were both given to him by another. And if he has not "glorified himself," surely you should forbear. Then we shall have our church-ordinances and our own ordination, is what many say. In answer to this I have only to ask, of what ordination is St. Paul speaking in the text? In his days there was but one, as there was but "one baptism:"¹ he could not have conceived of another. And there ought never to have been another, for there is but one baptism still. Rival altars in the Church of God, and the baptized set against the baptized, are an awful spectacle in his sight. God has indeed, in his adorable mercy, brought good out of this enormous evil. But while we acknowledge this with thankfulness, we must not shut our eyes to the character of the evil itself.

But there was, as we have already seen, another laying on of hands, viz. on all the congregation, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. It is a great mistake to say that the purpose of it was to communicate miraculous gifts. They were merely one manifestation of the Spirit, suited for the time; and all did not receive them. But the anointing of the Spirit himself, in whatever form he was manifested, was designed for the whole Church. That this laying on of hands was intended to continue, may be certainly gathered from two considerations. St. Paul calls it in the text, one of the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and surely he would not have spoken thus of a merely temporary ordinance. He also connects it with baptism; and if we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, we shall find that this connection was very close indeed. Baptism was the seal of God that his people were entitled to expect this heavenly anointing, and the laying on of hands was the channel through which it was communicated. When St. Peter and his fellow apostle went down to Samaria, they found that the disciples had been "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus," and they forthwith "laid their hands on them." The case of St. Paul at Ephesus is more striking still. He found disciples there who knew only St. John's baptism; but he

¹ Ephesians iv, 5.

commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord, and when this was done, immediately "laid his hands on them." Now the principles of Christianity are unalterable, and Christian baptism is the same from age to age. The laying on of hands therefore of which we are now speaking, was intended by God to continue; and the Church of England in appointing its continuance in confirmation, has acted in a manner becoming her apostolic character. Like ordination, this holy function has by necessity descended on the bishops since apostles have been gathered to their rest. But this makes no essential difference; the blessing conveyed is with God and not with man. He has no need of any man's hands, to bless his people, nor of any man's mouth, to instruct them. The hands of the bishop, and the mouth of the minister, are used by him only because it seems good in his sight; man has been from the beginning, and will be to the end, heaven's appointed instrument in saving and blessing his fellow. Are we then, men ask, to teach our children to expect the blessing of the Holy Ghost from the bishop's hands, in confirmation? Most certainly you are; Almighty God is no trifler in his Church, every thing with him is deep reality. But it is not received, is the objection. I believe that it is received, when the rite is not turned into a form; and this is witnessed by the experience of many who date their first conscious visitation of the Spirit from this very time. And we may not attribute this merely to the instruction which preceded, lest we separate what God has joined together. He has connected instruction with imposition of hands; and the blessing given must be attributed to both.

Such then are the third and fourth lessons of Christianity. As I have already pointed out, they respect us as members of a body, and not as individuals. For taken together, they declare that God having received us into his Church, has bestowed on us in Christ the remission of sin, and the gift of the Holy Ghost; a ministry also to teach us concerning this, his inestimable mercy; and hands privileged to communicate this heavenly gift. He who knows not these things, is as yet ignorant of one of the principles of the faith which

he professes, has yet to learn the second letter of the Christian alphabet.

"Resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment" come last in order. Their doctrine is that all men shall take their bodies again, and that this shall be followed by a judgment, the consequences of which shall be eternal. It is needless to point out the evident connection between this resurrection and this judgment. The resurrection of Christ is at once the pledge of both. His having taken his body again is the pledge that we shall do so, for "in Christ," Scripture tells us, "shall all be made alive."¹ And it is the pledge of judgment also: he rose that he might judge; God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."² It is also declared with equal emphasis that we shall rise to be judged. "The hour is coming," says our blessed Lord, speaking of himself, "in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."³ The indissoluble connection between the resurrection of the dead, and their eternal judgment for weal or for woe, is strikingly marked in these two expressions. The resurrection of life is our rising to inherit, by the award of the Judge, the eternal kingdom. And the resurrection of damnation is our rising to inherit by the same award the fire which is prepared for the devil. And as the resurrection of Christ is the pledge that this judgment shall take place, it is the pledge of his people's eternal happiness. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says St. Peter, "who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."⁴ It is also the pledge of the eternal misery of the wicked. For it assures them that they have a Judge, living to sentence them and living to execute his sentence. Such are the fifth and sixth lessons of the

¹ I Cor. xv. 22.

² Acts xvii. 31.

³ John v. 28, 29.

⁴ I Pet. i. 3.

Christian faith. They respect us, as I have already mentioned, in our relation to the world to come.

I have thus exhibited the principles of our holy religion. Taken together, they declare God's kindness to us as individuals, his kindness to us as members of his Church, and his intentions concerning us in the world to come. They teach us also that he expects a return for this kindness in our believing his gospel, receiving his Spirit, forsaking sin and learning to love and serve him. And they warn us not to suppose that this kind One cannot be severe, pointing our eyes forward not only to the kingdom which is prepared for them that love him, but to the fire which is reserved for his enemies. It is absolutely needful that we understand these truths, and they are not difficult of understanding; they are the A, B, C of Christianity.

The Hebrews were well acquainted with them; but St. Paul finds fault because they did not discern in them the germ of higher truths, and so stood still instead of advancing. Before considering how this applies to us, what those truths are to which we ought to advance, it may be well to inquire whether the Church, as a body, in the present day, has attained to these principles. In asking this question, I do not speak of those who have never given any serious thought to religion. For though they belong to the Church as baptized persons, their minds are a blank on the whole subject. But I speak of those who are laying religion to heart, and professing to walk in the fear of God. And I ask, have they as a class, attained to these "principles?" Would to God it could be said that they had! But no one can possibly say so who has made any extended or intelligent observation of what is called "the religious world." On every one of these principles much misapprehension prevails. Very many serious persons are completely astray on the first and most elementary. They are perplexed with the idea that repentance and faith is some condition of mercy, which they are to perform before obtaining it. Or, to vary the error, they imagine that repentance for sin gives the right and title to believe on Christ for salvation! And

as we advance in these principles, the darkness increases. What knowledge is there now, (I speak generally) of "the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands?" It is thought presumption to be assured of the remission of sins, and to look for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. And yet these are the very things sealed in baptism. Again, men will come to God's house, to hear his word preached; but they forget that it is his word; they come to hear a man speak to them. They do not enter the house of God, expecting to hear, through his appointed ordinance, the voice of him who dwells there. And yet this is the difference between the holy ministrations of the sanctuary, and the expositions of a scientific lecture-room. The latter is man speaking; the former, in the Divine intention, is God speaking by man's mouth: if it is not so, woe, woe be to the minister! But we do not hear what instructs us, is the immediate objection. And one great cause of our not doing so, I answer, is the lack of this very faith. Finally, on the subject of resurrection and judgment very great darkness prevails. I have conversed with many serious persons, some of them teachers of others, who had no idea of any happiness hereafter but that of the disembodied state, and who complained, when you spoke of a material body, that you lowered their conceptions of heaven! And when the resurrection of Christ has been instanced, it has been met not unfrequently by the startling reply that for aught we know, his human body may not exist for ever, that his humanity peradventure shall be absorbed into Deity again!! The poet has expressed this sentiment in language beautiful indeed, but fearfully unscriptural,—

"His human form dissolved on high
In its own radiancy."

I am not bringing a railing accusation in stating these things, but declaring a mournful truth. And it is well that it be declared. There is no medicine for our spiritual pride like a comparison with the early Church. The Hebrews knew all these things; and yet, in the judgment of an inspired Apostle, they were only children. What then, in the judgment of God, is the present condition of the Church?

If the Church in this day, has not attained to these principles, she cannot be expected to go beyond them. Nor does she. A great proportion of what is called *evangelical preaching* now, is a mere tale of the crucifixion; all theology is comprehended by it in the statement that Christ died for our sins. And men justify themselves in this by the declaration of St. Paul, that he was "determined to know nothing...save Jesus Christ and him crucified."¹ But is there nothing in JESUS CHRIST save a tale of suffering and death? Yes, verily there is: He is God's Melchizedec; not the Sacrifice only, but also the Priest and the King. To preach the Cross by itself, is not then to preach Christ fully. THE CROSS, THE MITRE and THE CROWN, all centre in his sacred person. And the attention of his people should be directed not only to what he did for them on Calvary, but to what he is doing now for them in heaven, and also to what he shall do on their behalf, when he shall come in the glory of his Father.

What then should be the object of the minister of Christ with his people? To ground them in the principles which St. Paul here enforces, and then to lead them on, To possess their hearts with the faith of God's love, and to win them by the exhibition of it, to his holy service. To lead them into their closets to ask their heavenly Father's teaching; to bring them from the closet to the sanctuary, expecting to hear there that Father's voice. To fill them with the hope of resurrection, to impart to them that knowledge of the Saviour which shall give them boldness in the day of judgment. He should thus roll back the vail which conceals the unseen world, and advancing to higher things, so set forth the glories of the ROYAL, EVERLASTING HIGH-PRIEST as to darken in their esteem who listen to him, all created beauty. Blessed is that Minister whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find to have so done; blessed is that flock on whom such labour is not in vain!

¹ I Corinthians II. 2.

See Appendix, Note E.

LECTURE V.

Hebrews vi. 4—8.

(DIGRESSION CONTINUED.)

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.”

ST. PAUL has just been exhorting the Hebrews not to be contented with knowing the principles of the doctrine of Christ, but to go on to “the perfection;” and he now states his reasons for this urgent admonition. That he designs the words of the text to be understood in this light, is manifest from the word “for” with which it commences. It is, as if he had said, I exhort you not to stand still, but to advance. For there is great fear of those who stand still, that they will lose the ground which they have gained, and fall away altogether. And if you do so, after you have been so far enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, it shall be impossible for me, as God’s minister,

to renew you again to repentance, since you will thus crucify to yourselves the Son of God afresh. You will moreover, by such apostacy, forfeit that blessing which God has promised to the obedient, and bring down on your souls that heavy curse which is the meet reward of the reprobate.

Such is the evident import of the tremendous words of the text. But when we come to consider them particularly, they present very great difficulties; and it becomes every one who ventures to expound them, to proceed both with caution and with modesty. I shall divide the subject into two parts, considering first, the case here supposed by St. Paul; and second, his judgment on it, with his reasons for this judgment.

I. To put us in possession of the case here supposed by St. Paul, let us read again his own words. It is the case of—

Those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away.

Expositors of Scripture have understood these words according to their different views of Christian doctrine. Some, holding with the Arminian the possibility of believers in Christ falling at any time from his grace and sinking at last into perdition, appeal to them in direct confirmation of the truth of that doctrine: while others, holding with the Calvinist that the believer cannot fall away, explain them by saying that they merely suppose a case, and that as God works by means, so a salutary fear of falling is used by the Apostle as the means of preserving God's people from such a fearful catastrophe. I see strong objections to both these views of the meaning of the text. Having stated these objections, I shall then present what I believe to be the truth which it contains.

If we had no other scripture than this to guide us, I frankly own that looking at its very strong language, it

would be difficult, if not impossible, to resist the Arminian's conclusion. But we have other scriptures, and in their light we must understand that which we are now considering: for the testimony of the blessed Spirit is ever in harmony with itself. And the statement that either the sin that is in their own hearts, or the sin that is in the world around them, or the power of Satan, can ever finally separate between Christ and his believing children, I regard as contrary not to a few texts, but to the great principles of the word of God. Let it suffice for the present to mention one of them. The life which we have received from Adam our father after the flesh, is a mortal life, for it has been forfeited by sin: but the life which we receive, through faith, from Christ our spiritual Father, is expressly declared to be an eternal life. If indeed this life did not commence till the believer had passed into glory, nothing could be deduced from such an argument. But it is not so; this life commences now. "He that believeth on me," said our Lord to the Jews, "HATH everlasting life."¹ He explained himself more fully when he said to his disciples, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."² And the disciple who records these words has added to them the testimony of his own experience. "We know," he says, speaking for himself and his brethren, "that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is THE TRUE GOD and ETERNAL LIFE."³ If we read these texts with understanding, we cannot fail to perceive that the conscious fellowship which the believer now has with Christ his Saviour, is the beginning of a life which cannot die. This sacred principle may indeed be feeble, nay it will be so till we quit this mortal body; but however feeble its beginnings are, it is an eternal principle. As Jesus is now "the true God," and will be so for ever, to know him, and to be in him, is to be possessed of life, life as eternal as his own. From these scriptural premises then,

¹ John vi. 47.² John xvii. 3.³ I John v. 20.

we may conclude that he who is possessed of this life can never finally perish. We are also possessed at this moment of the life of Adam. But we may lose it before another sun is set, for the reason which has been already given,—it is a mortal life. And if the same thing be true of the life which we have through faith in Christ, if we may be possessed of it now, and yet at some future period lose it for ever, it also is a mortal, instead of being an eternal life. But this conclusion is directly at variance with Christ's own reasoning on the subject. "Your fathers," he said to Israel, "did eat manna, and are dead; this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die."¹ There is no possibility, I am satisfied, of fairly meeting this argument. To say that the life shall endure as long as faith endures, is to betray ignorance of the whole subject. For faith and love are the actings of spiritual life, as much as breathing and moving are the actings of natural life. When breathing and moving cease, it is because natural life has ceased; when faith and love cease, it is because spiritual life has ceased. But Christ declares expressly in the words just quoted, that spiritual life cannot cease; and he repeats this assertion in still stronger language, for he adds immediately, "if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."¹ This may be made further evident both from the nature of faith, and from the relation between Christ and his people. Christ himself has instructed us on this subject, in that discourse to which we have already referred. He says of the believer, "he dwelleth in me and I in him."¹ To dwell in Christ is to make him the object of our confidence. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord...he is my God; in him will I trust."² In thus dwelling in Christ we trust in him for the forgiveness of our sins past, and for grace to subdue them in the future; we trust in him also for grace to overcome the world, and to protect us against the wiles of the devil. And in this confidence we cannot be disappointed,

¹ John vi. 49, 50, 51, 56.² Psalm xci. 1, 2.

because the Lord is faithful. These hostile influences cannot then prevail to separate us finally from Christ; for if they did prevail to do so, this confidence would be disappointed. And thus, from the nature of faith, we may certainly demonstrate its continuance. Nor is this all. When the pride of our hearts is subdued and we trust in Christ for pardon, and when our love of sin and of a present world is subdued and we trust in him for grace to overcome them, Christ comes into the hearts thus opened to him and takes possession of them by the Holy Ghost; we dwelling in him, he also dwells in us. As he declares by St. John, "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."¹ And when Jesus thus comes into our hearts and makes them his abode, who shall dispossess him? Sin cannot dispossess him, unless it is stronger than he. Nor can Satan dispossess him. We have many instances, in the gospel-narrative, of Jesus casting Satan out; but we have no instance of the contrary: and the strong man, blessed be God, has not yet waxed stronger than his conqueror. It is impossible then that Jesus should be dispossessed; no power of evil can compel him to quit that heart which he has made his abode. And from this may be demonstrated the certainty of the believer's final salvation. The Saviour to whom he has surrendered himself, will keep that which is committed to him till the day of judgment and of glory.*

May St. Paul then be understood, as some Calvinistic expositors say, to be merely supposing a case in the words before us, that by the influence of salutary fear he might preserve the Hebrews faithful? I cannot believe this. It is unworthy of the blessed Spirit to suppose an imaginary case: it is unworthy of men writing under his inspiration to seek to influence the minds of God's people by the fear of an imaginary evil. Besides what do men mean by a salutary fear? The fear of falling one day into endless perdition is a fear that "hath torment;"

¹ Revelation iii. 20.

* II Timothy i. 12.

the dreadful thought that even though committing our souls to Christ's keeping, and trusting in him for victory over the devil, the world, and the flesh, we may be given up to these enemies and destroyed by them, is more than sufficient to damp the believer's joy in God, and to make him distrust his Saviour. So far from being salutary then, such a fear as this would be in the highest degree detrimental. Moreover, it is not a truly Christian motive, and cannot be made use of as such. This may be made evident in a very simple manner. We are commanded, as the children of God by faith, to have "the same mind in us, which was also in Christ Jesus;"¹ which implies that we are to be influenced by his joys, his anxieties, his hopes and *his fears*. Now was the blessed Jesus ever influenced by such a fear as this, the fear of one day losing his eternal Father's favour? It would be blasphemy to say so. It is no motive for his people then; and he who would make use of it as such, separates the believer from his Saviour. Tormenting fear is the motive of the slave, the lash which is held over the sullen and disobedient. But filial confidence is the motive of the child: looking up to heaven and crying with Jesus, Abba Father, we are filled with that joy of the Lord which is the strength of his people.

St. Paul appears to me to be declaring in the words before us, only a mournful truth, viz. the possibility of men going a certain length in religion, and after all, falling utterly away. And he reminds the Hebrews of this, because their standing still at the principles of the doctrine of Christ, made him afraid that this might possibly be the case with them. He indeed discerned that about them, as we shall see in the next lecture, which greatly quieted these fears; but he had no infallible assurance of their gracious state, and saw enough to constrain him to write this warning. Looking at the text in this light, let us consider it most carefully. It will shew to us how far men went in the apostle's days, who after all, apostatized from Christ; how far men may go in our own days, and after all, alas, fall back into perdition.

¹ Phil. ii. 5.

In looking then into the words before us with the attention which they deserve, we discern three things, as marking those who may afterwards fall away, viz. knowledge of religion, comfort in religion, and power. These three things were all found in the Hebrews; for otherwise this warning would not have applied to them. They had received the knowledge of religion; for they had been "enlightened." They had discerned Jesus, the despised Nazarene, whom their blinded rulers had crucified as a malefactor, to be indeed the Messiah promised to the fathers; they had been convinced that there was none other name save his only, whereby they could be saved. They had therefore been baptized in that name, and having, through the imposition of hands before referred to, been made "partakers of the Holy Ghost," they had received doubtless in yet larger measure, "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge" of the Saviour.¹ They had also found comfort in religion, for they had "tasted the heavenly gift," and "the good word of God." They had experienced the sweetness of the gospel, they had been cheered by its declarations of grace and its promises of glory. "After ye were illuminated," says St. Paul to them in another place, "ye endured a great fight of afflictions." But "ye took joyfully," he adds, "the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance."² They had also experienced the power of God sent down from heaven upon them, in attestation to Jesus as the Saviour. Having received the Holy Ghost by the imposition of apostles' hands, they had both exercised in their own persons, and seen exercised by others, "the powers of the world to come." They had healed the sick, they had raised the dead, they had cast out the devil; they had performed, or had seen performed, all those mighty acts which were a fore-shewing, even in this world, of the powers of that which shall follow. But if the Hebrews had really attained to all these things, what more, we are disposed to ask, could they lack to make them Christians indeed? And if those who had made such

¹ Ephesians i. 17.² Hebrews x. 32-34.

attainments might still fall away, which of us shall esteem himself secure? Let us look a little deeper into the text, and we shall see that something is wanting in the enumeration of the apostle. He speaks of knowledge, comfort and power, but he does not speak of LOVE. And when he omits to mention this bond of perfectness, we need not be surprised at his speaking of the possibility of falling away. For if love be wanting in our religion, everything vital is wanting. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," says St. Paul in another place, "and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."¹ This language is *much stronger* than that which we are now considering. The Hebrews knew only the principles of the doctrine of Christ, but it speaks of all knowledge, and of the understanding of all mysteries. It speaks also of the highest exercise of the powers of the world to come, even of removing mountains by the strength of faith. And surely the man to whom it was given to discourse with an angel's eloquence on the wonderful works of God, could scarcely fail to find some comfort in what he uttered, to taste that good word which he was declaring, and that heavenly gift whose value he was setting forth to others. And yet even of him who possessed this knowledge and power, and to whom it was given to discourse on divine things with such superhuman eloquence, St. Paul declares that wanting charity, he was nothing in the sight of God. Our blessed Lord declares the same thing. For he tells us of some who shall remind him at last, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"—to whom he shall profess, "I never knew you."² And he tells us of others who for a time had found comfort in religion, receiving the word "with joy," but who for want of the "honest and good heart," i. e.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.² Matt. vii. 22, 23.

the heart of love, "in time of temptation fall away."¹ In the light of these Scriptures I would expound the text. I believe that it describes a religion of knowledge, comfort and power which may after all, come to nothing for lack of love. And I am confirmed in this interpretation by observing, as we shall see in the next lecture, what it was which quieted the fears of St. Paul concerning the Hebrews, and gave to him a comfortable persuasion that their religion was not of this kind. It was his discovering in their past history and present behaviour, indications of their being possessed of LOVE.

It becomes us to give heed to this solemn warning. "The powers of the world to come" are not indeed now in the Church, but the rest of St. Paul's description is verified in the experience of every day. It is perfectly possible for men to attain to the knowledge of religion, and even to great comfort in religion, while yet it has no root in their hearts. They may learn from the preached word brought home to their consciences in the power of the Spirit, their lost estate by nature, their need of a Saviour, and that Christ moreover is a Saviour suited that need. And under this conviction they may listen with joy to the message of salvation, receiving comfort from its gracious declarations and cheered by its promises of mercy. Under the influence of this joy they may also do many things in God's service, till they are supposed by others, and really suppose themselves to be in the way to the kingdom of God. But all the while, to use the somewhat quaint but expressive language of an older school of divinity, the persons of whom we are speaking, have never closed with Christ as a Saviour. Their conviction of their lost estate has not been so deep as thoroughly to subdue their pride. They have looked back on their past lives, and seen themselves to be sinners needing mercy, but they have not discovered the depth of the wickedness and corruption that is still within them. They have never been constrained therefore to fly for refuge to the Saviour and to surrender their hearts unreservedly to

¹ Luke viii. 13, 15.

the regenerating power of his Almighty Spirit. Their obedience and their zeal for God have been the fruit of religious comfort; they have not been prompted by the sober, steady, abiding impulse of love. Temptation comes on this superficial religion; the cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches entangle its professors; and under these evil influences it vanishes. The heart having again found its comfort and its solace in the things of the world and of time, gradually loses all relish for the things of God and of eternity. The knowledge continues, but like all unsanctified knowledge, it hardens that heart still more. The profession perhaps continues also, but all its vitality is fled; for those who have passed through the experience now described, are, of all men, the most unimpressible and the most fearfully estranged from God.

II. We now read St. Paul's judgment on this case,—

It is impossible...to renew them again unto repentance;

and also his reasons for this judgment,—

Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For LAND which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but IF IT BEAR thorns and briers IT is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

The only means which St. Paul had, or which any minister of God possesses of bringing men to true repentance, is the exhibition of the love of Jesus. But you already know this love, he says to the Hebrews, as fully as I can declare it to you. You have moreover tasted its consolations, and have had its truth attested from heaven in the Holy Ghost descending on yourselves. And if in the full knowledge of this love, and in the full experience of this mercy, you deliberately turn away from him, enlisting yourselves among his bitter and implacable enemies, I possess no

means of renewing you to repentance. The most powerful considerations which the gospel furnishes, have already been brought to bear on you; if you sin against these considerations and prove yourselves insensible to their influence, I have nothing stronger to address to you; and I shall therefore find it impossible to touch your hearts any more. The experience of God's ministers attests, alas, continually, the truth of this solemn warning. The mere fact that a man has lived in time past, in sin and estrangement from God, ought to be no discouragement in bearing to him the gospel-message. It may be that no one has instructed him; it may be that he has never heard of that love against which sin is an offence; it may be that when he does hear of it, his heart will be melted within him. But when it is otherwise, when we find ourselves speaking to one who knows everything which we can tell him, who once professed to be influenced by the love of God, but has long held it in unrighteousness, the case is very different. I have never met with such a case without a renewed conviction of the truth of the words before us, that it is impossible to renew the enlightened again to repentance. The two-edged sword of God's word has been blunted against the adamant hardness of the heart, and is in consequence a powerless weapon in the minister's feeble hand.

We must remember moreover that apostacy provokes God to deny that grace which alone can give efficacy to the words of his minister. St. Paul points to this also in the words before us. Those who in your circumstances, he says to the Hebrews, apostatize from Christ, not only declare to the world your conviction that he was a deceiver, and that he deserved his ignominious death; but you declare this as the result of acquaintance with him, the result of having been among his people, the result of having proved his religion. He is thus in you crucified afresh and put to an open shame; you are worse than his original betrayer, worse than his original murderers. And can God be expected to vouchsafe his grace anew after such aggravated provocation? He cannot be expected to do so. Those who

receive that grace into their hearts and bring forth under its holy influence those fruits of righteousness and truth which are meet for that heavenly husbandman, shall be rewarded with his blessing. But those on the other hand who repay him for all the privileges which he has bestowed on them, with such base ingratitude and treachery, shall be eternally rejected from his mercy. The day is at hand when he shall thunder against them from the judgment-seat, "Depart from me, ye cursed:" and the end of those cursed ones is the "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

It is plain then, that whether he regarded the means which he possessed as God's minister, of bringing men to repentance, or looked at the principles of the divine procedure toward men, St. Paul considered it impossible to recover again such apostates as he here describes. It does not follow however that this rule is applicable in all its strictness now; our case is not in all respects parallel with that of the early Church; and God may, and often does recover from most fearful blacksliding. But while I say this on the one hand that I may not limit his mercy, I feel constrained to add on the other, that it is an awful thing to try what amount of provocation his patience will bear. And the man who having tasted the consolations of religion, turns back again afterwards into the ways of sin and folly, thereby declaring openly that he has found the living God to be "a wilderness," and "a land of darkness,"² puts that patience to a trial which it may well make us tremble to contemplate. "It had been better" for him, to use the language of St. Peter, "not to have known the way of righteousness," than after he has known it, to have turned from God's holy commandment. For if "the sow that was washed," to use the image of the same apostle, shall return "to her wallowing in the mire,"³ it is presuming on Divine mercy to expect a second cleansing.

Let us now in conclusion, apply these lessons to ourselves. The connection between the words which we have now considered and their preceding context teaches us that those

¹ Matt. xxv. 41.² Jeremiah ii. 31.³ II Peter ii. 21, 22.

who have received into their hearts as life from God, "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," will be found advancing. It is the very nature of life to expand into maturity: it was just because he did not discern the Hebrews to be advancing in this way, that St. Paul addressed to them the warning of the text, leaving it on record also for our instruction. But let us bear in mind on the other hand, that life only can advance, and see that we are receiving these principles of the doctrine of Christ as life to our souls. Let us seek to know the Saviour as an object of confidence, trusting in him for the forgiveness of our sins, and committing to him our sinful souls to be washed and cleansed and sanctified for the holy service of God. We shall thus know him as an object of love, for genuine confidence always produces love. And genuine love in its turn strengthens and perfects confidence; "there is no fear in love," says the beloved apostle, "perfect love casteth out fear."¹ Thus to know the Saviour as the object of unsuspecting, affectionate confidence, is LIFE—LIFE FROM ABOVE, the blessed gift of him who lives for evermore. And he from whom this life proceeds, matures and perfects it through the ordinances of his Church. We were instructed concerning these ordinances in the last discourse, when we considered "the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands." For we are his Church, his husbandry,² his garden,³ and the Father of Jesus is our heavenly husbandman.⁴ And as the earth, by careful tillage, and by drinking in the continual, fertilizing rain, brings forth herbs to recompense man's labour, we in like manner, if we have indeed received this life, shall recompense the labour of our God, and receive his blessing. Opening our hearts to the word of heavenly instruction, and drinking it in as it "cometh oft upon" us, we shall "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour," and bring forth those fruits of righteousness which are to his praise and glory. St. Peter, from whom I have just quoted, goes on to tell us what those fruits are. "Add to your faith

¹ I John iv. 18.² 1 Cor. iii. 9.³ Cant. iv. 16.⁴ John xv. 1.

virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." We have seen already that this life is eternal. And St. Peter confirms us in this truth; for having enumerated these fruits of it, he continues, "if ye do these things, ye shall never fall... an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom."¹ Let us receive then into our hearts through faith, this blessed, this fruit-bearing life. It will preserve us from the works and ways of unrighteousness, and from the fiery indignation reserved for those who follow them: it will enable us to serve God now, and prepare us for his presence hereafter.

To this word of exhortation, I would add a word of warning also derived from the text. Let us take heed of the religion of mere knowledge. It is a fearfully perilous thing to have the understanding enlightened in the mysteries of the faith, while the heart remains unaffected: the knowledge which does not melt, never fails to harden. And let us not be too desirous of mere comfort, as if religion consisted in elevated feelings and extatic joys. Let us labour to be filled with Love. "Comfort may be the affair of an hour:" love is begun communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. It is that "bond of perfectness" between the soul and God which "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come"² shall ever be able to sever. It is that eternal principle which shall survive the decay of nature and the change of all created things, itself enduring as the throne of God. Finally, it is that principle of mighty power which shall give us "boldness in the day of judgment."³ When he appears, before the rebuke of whose eye the heavens and earth shall flee away,⁴ and when the fire which goes before

¹ II Peter i. 5—8, 10, 11; iii. 18. ² Romans viii. 38, 39. ³ I John iv. 17.

⁴ Revelations xx. 11.

him burns up his enemies on every side,¹ those who have known him as the object of their affectionate confidence, unaffrighted by his awful majesty, and by the throes and convulsions of expiring nature, shall lift up their heads, exclaiming "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."² The apostle who leant on Jesus' bosom concludes his prophecy of the glories of that day by saying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."³ And if we learn with him to lean on the bosom of the Saviour, we shall also be prepared with him for the appearing of the Judge. Let us remember then the counsel of St. Paul, "follow after LOVE:" for "now abideth faith, hope, LOVE, these three; but the greatest of these is LOVE."⁴ Almighty God of his infinite mercy write this blessed lesson on our hearts!

¹ Psalm xcvi. 3.

² Isaiah xxv. 9.

³ Revelations xxii. 20.

⁴ I Corinthians xiii. 13; xiv. 1. original.

See Appendix, Note F.

LECTURE VI.

Hebrews vi. 9—12.

(DIGRESSION CONTINUED.)

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

We may well suppose that when the tremendous words which formed the subject of the last lecture, were read in the ears of the Hebrew Churches, they would fill those who heard them with consternation. They would say to each other, it is plain that the apostle has lost all confidence in us, and that he regards us as fast receding to apostacy; and as he cannot think so without good reason, we fear that it must be the case. St. Paul himself seems to have been afraid of this, and of its exercising an evil influence on those whose spiritual welfare he was so desirous to promote. For he hastens, in the words which we have just read, to qualify his language, assuring the Hebrews of his confidence in their state, and declaring his reason for such confidence. But at the same time, to prevent the alarm which he had sounded from losing its effect, he follows up this expression of confidence with a most solemn and earnest exhortation.

Such are the contents of the text. The confidence which St. Paul expresses in the Hebrews, and the reason assigned for it, naturally present themselves as the first subject of consideration; whilst the terms of his exhortation as naturally form the second. We shall therefore take up these important topics in order.

I. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Let not the language which I have used, says St. Paul, make you stand in doubt for a moment, either of the sincerity of my affection for you, or of the depth of my interest in you. For I have confidence that you are Christ's people, and you are therefore the beloved of my heart. Though I have spoken of the danger of apostacy, I am "persuaded better things of you and things which accompany salvation;" I believe that you will persevere in the course which you have begun, till you attain the salvation of God and the glory of his kingdom. I have observed in you a "work and labour of love," shewed towards God's name; and I feel assured that he to whom it has been shewed, is "not unrighteous to forget" it. A work and labour of love is something which we undertake for God's service, under the constraining impulse of affection towards him. The word "labour," indicates that it is in itself toilsome and painful, but that it is persevered in notwithstanding, because love makes labour light. This was the nature of the service which the Hebrews had rendered in time past, and were then rendering to God. It was "shewed toward his name;" implying that his name was the object of their faith, and had excited their love. The name of God is his infinitely perfect character. When Moses entreated that he might be permitted to see his glory, "the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed THE

NAME of the Lord." He "proclaimed The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."¹ This is the name which is revealed in Christ. It is the name of him who "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son;" who in the blood of that Son, when he hung upon the cross as the uncleared representative of the guilty, put away man's transgressions; who through the same blood proclaims to man forgiveness. The Hebrews had known this name, and had put their trust in it; they had believed in God as their forgiving Father, and had been taught by that faith which always works by love, to surrender their affections to him who had first loved them. Nothing therefore which was undertaken for his glory, had seemed in their eyes an exertion or a toil. The particular direction which this love to God had taken, was toward his poor saints. They had sought them out in their destitution, ministered to them in their necessities, and comforted them in their sorrows. And they had not been deterred by fear of suffering, from acknowledging these persecuted saints as brethren. St. Paul reminds them, "ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing stock...and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used."² He had therefore confidence in their state. He knew that the eye of God was upon these works and labours, and that he was not unrighteous to forget either them or the blessed principle from which they proceeded. But can any works and labours of ours deserve the remembrance of the righteous God? They cannot *deserve* it: but he has said that he will remember them, and he is not unrighteous to break his word. The gracious work of ministry to the afflicted saints, has above all others the promise of such remembrance. "Whosoever," said our Lord to his disciples, "shall give you a cup of water to drink...verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."³ And again

¹ Exodus xxxiv. 5—7.² Hebrews x. 32, 33.³ Mark ix. 41.

on he tells us that in the day of glory he shall say unto them the right hand, "Come, ye blessed...inherit the kingdom :... for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." The Lord receives these ministrations of mercy in the persons of his saints; for I "Verily say unto you," he adds, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."¹ Now St. Paul knew that the members of the Hebrew Churches had been, and were still given to such ministration. He had seen them feeding the hungry saints, giving drink to the thirsty, and waiting on the sick. He knew that they had opened their doors on many occasions to the poor afflicted wanderer and clothed his nakedness, that they had sought out such as were in prison and had not been ashamed of their chain.* He knew that the word of A KING³ was passed that these gracious acts should be remembered, and he therefore came to the blessed conclusion, that Christ would not suffer those who had thus loved him to fall finally from his grace, but would surely preserve them from every evil work, to the promised rewards of his heavenly kingdom.

This is indeed most consoling. It proves incontestably the truth of what was stated in the last lecture, viz. that if genuine love to God be found in us, we cannot fall finally from his mercy. Love is far too precious in his eyes to be thus vilely cast away. The words before us were not written for the Hebrews only. We read in the prophet Malachi, concerning all that think upon God's name, "they shall be MINE, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."⁴ They are the Lord's "special treasure,"⁵ emphatically HIS; none of them shall be suffered to fall into the enemy's hand. Shall God ever look down from his throne of light upon the miserable tenants of darkness, and say of them, They once loved me? No, it

¹ Matthew xxv. 34—40.

² II Tim. i. 16—18.

³ Matthew xxv. 34.

⁴ Malachi iii. 16, 17.

⁵ Marginal reading of last text.

shall never be. Or shall those who blaspheme him in the regions of despair ever look up and say, We once thought with tender affection on that name which we are cursing now? No, it shall never be. They prophesied in that name, in that name they cast out devils, in that name they did many wonderful works; and they remind Christ at the judgment-seat of all these things. But wonderful works and the casting out of devils are not works and labours of love; of these they cannot speak. The flame of holy affection towards God was at no time kindled in their hearts; for the Omniscient Judge declares, "I NEVER knew you."¹ Had that sacred flame ever been kindled, nothing should have extinguished it. For while the religion of mere knowledge, comfort, and power, may and often does, as we saw in the last lecture, evaporate and come to nothing, "charity never faileth."²

Let us however consider more particularly the ground of final salvation. It is not correct to say on the one hand, that we shall be saved if we love God; such a sentiment makes Divine grace to wait on human merit. But neither is it correct to say on the other hand, that we shall be saved if He loves us. Scripture tells us expressly that this blessed love may be rejected, and that if it be rejected, it shall condemn instead of saving. What has been already stated, appears to me to be the revealed truth of God on this infinitely momentous matter. His love proceeds from his own bosom, uncaused by anything in the fallen creature. It is declared in the cross of Jesus, it is published in the blessed gospel; and it comes to our hearts, seeking to produce its own likeness, to awaken a response towards him. If it fail to awaken this response, it produces deeper condemnation. "If our gospel be hid," says St. Paul, "it is hid to them that are lost:"³ "I was an hungred; and ye gave me no meat," is the final sentence of the Lord Jesus.⁴ For the lost ones are those who have never believed Christ's love, and who, not believing, have never learned to return

¹ Matthew vii. 22, 23.² I Cor. xiii. 8.³ II Corinthians iv. 3.⁴ Matthew xxv. 42.

it. But if this love awaken in our bosoms the response of confiding affection, we are bound to our God for ever by the golden link of charity. Eternity itself shall never separate between the God of love and that human spirit by whom his love has been received. A man loves a woman and woos her to be his wife, but she rejects his love. No bond is therefore formed between them. He may rise to wealth and distinction, whilst she sinks neglected into poverty and destitution; she has no claim on him whose affection she has slighted and put away. But if she accept his love and become his wife, the case is altogether altered. The husband and wife cease from the moment of their union, to have any separate interests; he endows her with his goods, and honours her with his honour. She cannot possibly sink into poverty, whilst he is blessed with abundance, for her claim on him is perfect and indefeasible. St. Paul applies this illustration. "Ye, my brethren," he writes to the Romans, "are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."¹ The risen Saviour then is our heavenly suitor. He has so loved us as to lay down his precious life on our behalf; and he now pleads with us in the blessed gospel, putting us in mind of this love, and beseeching us to put our trust in him, to place ourselves under his protection, to submit to his guidance, and to surrender our hearts to his holy Spirit, that we may bring forth fruit unto God. If our hearts remain shut against this pleading, the love even of the cross cannot save us. We can have no claim on affection which we have rejected and put away; we may be in the depths of perdition, whilst the Saviour sits enthroned in glory. But if we receive his love and accept him as the husband of our hearts, we are bound to him for ever, by the indissoluble marriage-tie. He cannot forget us amid the trials of time; "he that loveth his wife," says St. Paul, "loveth himself...I speak concerning Christ and the Church."² Neither can he forget

¹ Romans vii. 4.

² Ephesians v. 28, 32.

us when the glories of eternity are revealed; he will endow us with his goods, he will honour us with his honour. Union with Christ then, through his love received into the heart, is the ground and security of final salvation. The language of St. Paul in the conclusion of the eighth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, is a most triumphant demonstration of this truth. For the Apostle in that famous scripture, is not speaking, as some seem to apprehend, of Divine love simply as existing in God's bosom and thereby ensuring the salvation of its objects, but of that love when it has awakened a response in the human heart. If he tells us on the one hand that God is the friend of his people and that he has given his Son to die for them, he tells us on the other, that he has brought them home to himself in calling and justification, that he has taught them to love him, and "that all things work together for good to them that love God." And if he tells us of a love in Christ which cannot forget his people, he tells us also that this sacred principle has taken in their hearts such deep and abiding root that they "are more than conquerors" over every effort of the enemy to make them forget him. "Tribulation" and "distress," "persecution," "famine," "nakedness," "peril," and "sword," all assail them in vain; for his sake who has loved them they rejoice to be "killed all the day long," and to be "accounted as sheep for the slaughter." And having told us these things, the Apostle sums up his argument, declaring his persuasion "that neither death, nor life,"... "nor things present, nor things to come,"... "nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers," nor any creature which God has made, shall ever be able to tear from the Divine embrace the souls whom the Saviour has loved, and by whom he is thus loved again.¹ Such is the value of love. Well saith the Holy Ghost, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."² The water-floods of his people's transgressions cannot quench it in the bosom of

¹ Romans viii. 23—39.² Canticles viii. 7.

God; the waves and billows of tribulation cannot drown it in his people's hearts. We need not be surprised then at the language of St. Paul in the text. It gave him no assurance of the safety of the Hebrews to know that they possessed knowledge, that they had found comfort in religion, and that they had been privileged to exercise "the powers of the world to come." But when he saw in them indications of this "excellent gift of charity," he was persuaded concerning them "things which accompany salvation."

II. Having given utterance to this expression of confidence in the spiritual state of the Hebrews, the apostle seems to have been afraid lest they might take undue advantage of it, and so stand still instead of pressing forward. He therefore adds immediately—

And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye MAY NOT BE slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

You have loved the Lord, he tells them, and ministered to his saints, and I commend you for it. But I desire that the same diligence which you have shewed in doing so, be manifested by every one of you in seeking after that enlarged knowledge of Christ which shall fill you, even to the end of your present course of trial, with a steadfast and unwavering expectation of the fulfilment of those glorious and everlasting promises which God has given to us in him. I counsel you to seek after this full assurance of hope, that proving its invigorating and soul-sustaining power, ye may be no longer slothful, but learn to bear patiently whatever afflictions the Lord may lay upon you; following their bright example, who confiding in his mercy have trod the same path before you. Their trials are now ended, and they inherit those promises in which they trusted; and so, after a season, shall it be with you, if you follow their blessed footsteps.

Such is the substance of the verses which are now before us. Hope was the blessed principle which was to banish slothfulness, and to inspire the Hebrews with patience in running their Christian race. What a striking proof is this of the truth of the statement of the last lecture, that slavish fear is not a Christian motive! The Apostle in the immediate context, has been speaking of the terrors of perdition. But when he would urge the Hebrews to press on, he alters his tone and speaks in the language of kindness, bidding them assure themselves of God's eternal mercy, and look forward to that day when, with all the company of the just, they should inherit his glorious promises. The worthies of the former dispensation, whose history is referred to at length in the eleventh chapter of this book, are evidently those whose example he here bids them follow. Such men as Jacob, Moses, and Samuel, had many trials appointed to them, and required, throughout their earthly course, to exercise both faith and patience. But they had the promises of God, and sustained by assured hope of their fulfilment, they did his work in their generation, and have now entered into his rest. Prove ye then, my brethren, says St. Paul, the invigorating and soul-sustaining power of the same promises, now revealed with a distinctness not vouchsafed in the days of these patriarchs, kings and prophets. So shall you copy the pattern of their exalted walk, and pressing forward to do Christ's will and to witness for his name in the midst of persecution and trial, shall have at last an entrance ministered to you, into his eternal kingdom.

But if fear is not a Christian motive, why, it may be asked, does St. Paul speak at all in the context of the terrors of perdition? And are the words of the text, it may be further asked, designed to supersede and nullify those which have preceded them? This were altogether unworthy of an inspired apostle. If St. Paul had been privileged with an infallible assurance of the gracious condition of all whom he was now addressing, he would not, I conceive, have made use of this language of terror. But he had no such

assurance; his judgment was that of charity only. If we bear this in mind, so far from thinking the apostle inconsistent, we shall see reason to admire his wisdom. He addresses to the Hebrews a word of severity and alarm, and then follows it up by one of kindness and encouragement. If there were any in the Hebrew Churches who were trusting in their knowledge, gifts, and attainments, whilst they were destitute of faith and love, the word of alarm might be blessed to arouse them from their lethargy, and to lead them to the Saviour. Whilst the faithful in these Churches could not fail to be affected with this most poignant grief and shame, that their backwardness in God's ways should have been such, as to suggest to the mind of the writer the possibility of their being of those who might draw back to perdition. And when they found that notwithstanding this, they were still the beloved of his heart, and that he spoke to them in tones of encouragement and kindness, they would be furnished with the most generous of all motives to press forward. For this kindness would melt their hearts and fill them with anxious, affectionate desire never again to be the occasion of similar disappointment either to him or to that Divine Master whose word was in his mouth. And the case is the same still. If we, as God's ministers, were privileged with an assurance from him, of the gracious state of all whom we addressed, we would never use the language of terror. To speak to a man as a *believer*, and yet to tell him of the danger of perdition, is indeed a contradiction in terms. Those who imagine that we are saved for the merit of our faith may not think so: but all who know what faith really is, viz. an unfeigned trust in Christ for salvation, and who know also that in the Saviour's faithfulness this trust cannot be disappointed, must discern it to be true. But God only knows with certainty who the believer is; we can know men as professors merely. And therefore it is that we use, in addressing them, the language of terror and alarm. Fear is often a most efficient instrument for rousing the dead and carnal professor, and constraining him to fly to

the Saviour. But after we have known that Saviour's name and trusted in his grace, fear can do no more for us. We come then under the influence of higher and nobler motives; we learn to obey as Jesus himself obeyed; our work and labour becomes a work and labour of love.

Let me now conclude this subject by applying to ourselves its other lessons also. Let us observe first, what the Hebrews had attained, and seek to make their attainments our own. They had attained to love; and we have seen its unspeakable value. Do we ask how we are to learn the lesson? As the Hebrews learned it, is the answer: let us know God's name. When that name was revealed to Moses, we read that he "made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." He also prayed for himself and for Israel, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance."¹ And if the glory of this name shines into our hearts, the effect on us will be the same. Beholding in Jesus the love of God, beholding in the bitter cross mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other,* seeing God revealed in it as the just God and yet the Saviour,² we shall desire above all things to be his people, and to have him for our God. We shall not ask *then* how we are to learn to love him; love will possess our hearts unbidden, and fill them to overflowing. But we must guard here against a mistake into which we may be apt to fall. It has been already pointed out that the love of God saves us by awakening a response in our hearts. And we may therefore suppose that our consciousness of loving God is to be our ground of confidence toward him, the ground of our hope of salvation. Let us take heed of this fatal error; our love will die under its influence, losing its generous character, and becoming mere covered selfishness. If a man seek the affections of a woman and prevail to gain them, the exhibition of his character which wins her love, wins her confidence along with it. And it is so with

¹ Exodus xxxiv. 8, 9.

² Psalm lxxxv. 10.

³ Isaiah xlv. 21.

the Saviour and us; the glory of his goodness shining into our hearts wins our affection, and wins, at the same instant, our entire and unreserved confidence. We trust without fear in this goodness, for our forgiveness and final salvation: and to one who is so gracious, we are not able to refuse our love. Affection and confidence are in fact twin-sisters: where you find the one you will never miss the other.

Let us be stirred up in the second place, to seek after that which the Hebrews had not attained. It is very instructive to compare the text with what St. Paul tells us of the Thessalonian Church. "Remembering without ceasing," he writes to them, "your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." God looked down on his Thessalonian children, and was witness to faith, love, and hope: he looked down on his Hebrew children and saw faith and love only; hope was lacking. The Thessalonians desired so ardently to behold the glory of their risen Saviour, that the Apostle felt constrained to pray for them, "The Lord direct your hearts into...the patient waiting for Christ."¹ But it was otherwise with the Hebrews; "the example and shadow of heavenly things"² was obscuring in their eyes the heavenly things themselves. Would to God, that in looking from his throne of light he saw in us all which he saw in the Hebrews! But even if it were so, it should not be enough; we must follow the Church which is commended, and not that which is blamed. Enlarged knowledge of the Saviour leads to the full assurance of hope. Let us not say then that knowledge is not necessary, that love is all: for knowledge, if received aright, increases love. Besides, love is not all. "Now abideth," says St. Paul, "faith, hope, love, these three."³ We must therefore prove their combined influence, if we would walk and live to the praise and glory of God. St. Paul brings the power of hope to bear on the Hebrews to quicken their slothfulness, and to lead them to follow the example of the saints who had gone before them. And it

¹ I Thess. i. 3, 10; II Thess. iii. 5.

² Hebrews viii. 5.

³ I Corinthians xiii. 13.

will exercise on us the same quickening power. Dwelling habitually among its invisible and eternal realities, we shall be raised above the petty interests of this present passing world; our faces will shine like that of Moses when he descended from the holy mount, and men shall bear witness of us that "our citizenship is in heaven."¹ This full assurance of hope, this faith also and this love, ought moreover, to be the attainment of "every one" of us. I know not whether in this day we receive little because we expect little, but certainly in this respect there is utterly a fault among us. A minister of God has hundreds of baptized families committed to his pastoral care, and preaches the word among them. One member of one family and two members of another, scattered up and down through the congregation, receive that word and live under its influence, and he who preaches it thanks God for his success. But why should the word of God produce so scanty a return? Would the apostles have been satisfied with this measure of success in the early Churches? No; they knew the way to heaven themselves, and, as we may learn from the text, the object for which they laboured was to carry all the baptized to heaven along with them. They did not indeed succeed with all, but those with whom they failed were the exception. But now alas we fail with the majority, and those are the exception whom we prevail to bring to Christ and save. It ought not surely so to be: God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."² He will have "every one" of us, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the parent and child, the husband and wife, the master and servant—ALL without exception, ALL without distinction, to know his name, to love him and to hope in his eternal mercy. May the Lord himself incline us to this, his holy will!

¹ Philip iii. 20. Original.² 1 Tim. ii. 4.

LECTURE VII.

Hebrews vi. 13—20.

(DIGRESSION CONCLUDED.)

“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec.”

It is with considerable hesitation that I apply myself to the exposition of this magnificent scripture. That the Almighty should swear by himself is an announcement so amazing, that it is impossible to give adequate expression to the feelings which it awakens. The eternal existence and glorious character which are thus staked to the fulfilment of his word, the unspeakable condescension which has induced him to offer such a pledge to his people, the everlasting and indefeasible security of those that trust in him a security perfect as his own eternal throne, all rush at once upon the mind and nearly overpower it. He must be irreverent indeed

who does not feel constrained to stand still and adore. Let us endeavour however by God's help, to consider this mighty subject. And may he who has caused all Scripture to be written for our learning, at once make it plain to our understandings, and impress it on our hearts!

The text naturally divides itself into three heads. We are told in the first place, that God made a promise and sware with an oath to Abraham, that Abraham believed him, and that God was faithful. We are told in the second place, that God has made this promise and sworn with this oath, to as many as take refuge in his mercy. Having told us these things, St. Paul enlarges in the third place, on the eternal security of this promise and oath of God.

I. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

St. Paul has been exhorting the Hebrews in the immediate context, to seek after "the full assurance of hope," and to "be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." From this exhortation the transition to the case of Abraham is at once natural and apposite. For God raised up that patriarch, made promises to him and fulfilled them, for the very end of so revealing the faithfulness of the Divine character, that his people to the end of time, might be encouraged to hope in his mercy. Abraham also was "the father of all them that believe,"¹ the most distinguished of that goodly company of whose faith and patience the apostle had just made mention. If therefore the Hebrews wanted encouragement to hope in God, the case of this patriarch furnished them with such encouragement. And if they wanted an example of such hope, they found this example in him. We, I need not say, may make the same twofold use of his history. Let us therefore give

¹ Romans iv. 11.

earnest heed to what St. Paul here declares concerning him.

He tells us that God "made promise to Abraham." This promise unquestionably was that of him should come the seed who should inherit Canaan, and from whom, in the fulness of time, should proceed that Saviour who was the destined heir of the eternal throne. But there was a smaller promise, viz. of the birth of a son to the patriarch in his childless age. And this smaller promise was the germ of the larger, containing the pledge of its accomplishment. Abraham doubtless regarded it in this light, for we are told in the words before us, that "he obtained the promise." He received Isaac from his Creator's hand as the first fruits of the fulfilment of his gracious word, and as the pledge that all which was promised in connection with him, should surely come to pass.

St. Paul tells us also, that God confirmed this promise with an oath, swearing by himself, "because he could swear by no greater," saying "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee."¹ These words were spoken on Mount Moriah, after the patriarch had offered his son on the altar, to convey to him the assurance of the Divine approbation and reward. But this suggests a difficulty. If they were spoken so many years after Isaac's birth, why does St. Paul introduce them in their present connection? why does he quote them as the language of an oath confirmatory of the promise of that birth? This difficulty I shall endeavour to explain. Twenty-five years before Isaac's birth God promised to Abraham, that he should be blessed and multiplied. And full fifteen years before it, he confirmed that promise with an oath. He did not indeed express that oath in words; but it was expressed by an act far more solemn than any words. And the words here quoted, which were spoken some forty years afterwards, were merely a clothing in language of the adjuration which had preceded. St. Paul therefore introduces them, to avoid circumlocution; it makes no difference to the essential truth of his argument, that they were uttered, in point of

¹ Genesis xxii. 16, 17.

time, subsequently to the birth of Isaac. Let us refer to the book of Genesis, that we may at once perceive the truth of these remarks, and in the light which it affords, apprehend the meaning of the text. "Abraham was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran." God had promised to him before this, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." He repeated that promise when the patriarch came into Canaan, saying, "Unto thy seed will I give this land."¹ And some six years afterwards he repeated it again, saying, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth."² The patriarch seems at first to have imagined that these promises were to be fulfilled in the issue of an adopted child. But God forbid him to think so, for he appeared to him in a vision and declared expressly, "he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir." He then assured him that his seed should be as the stars of heaven in multitude, and repeated the promise of the inheritance of the land.³ The patriarch having received so many assurances of Divine mercy, ventured at length to solicit a sign of their fulfilment. And this brings us to the very point which we are now considering; God, in answer to this petition, confirmed his word by AN OATH. "Take me," he said, "an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon." "And Abram took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another." Having done this he waited many hours in anxious expectation; but at length, "behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces:" and "the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land."⁴ These verses require a few words of explanation. It was common in old times, to establish covenants by sacrifice. There were two modes of doing this, The contracting parties sometimes laid their hands on the head of

¹ Gen. xii. 1—7. ² Gen. xiii. 15, 16. ³ Gen. xv. 1—7. ⁴ 8—18.

the victim, imprecating on themselves the same death which had descended upon it, if they observed not their plighted word. At other times, as in the case before us, the victim was cut asunder, and the contracting parties passed between the parts of it. But the meaning of this act was the same. It was, May we be cut asunder like this victim, if we keep not the faith which we have pledged! This covenanting by sacrifice was regarded as the most solemn form of adjuration, far more so than any oath which could be expressed by word. If a man deceived his neighbour after having so sworn to him, it was the most atrocious offence which could possibly be committed, and brought down the Divine malediction. The prophet Jeremiah has recorded a most awful example of this. It was the commandment of God by Moses that every seventh year should be a year of release to Hebrew slaves; but the Jews in the days of Jeremiah were living in contempt of this commandment. And though, when the army of the king of Babylon approached Jerusalem, they were so wrought upon by their fears as to make a covenant by sacrifice to perform it, they forgot their promises and brought their brethren again into subjection whenever these fears subsided. Let us hear the judgment of God on this atrocious breach of faith: it fully confirms the statements which have just been made. "I will give the men," he said, "which have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth,"¹ Let us mark the emphasis of this judgment. Twice over does the Almighty declare that they had passed between the parts of the calf. And the deadly vengeance which this significant act imprecated, was therefore to be accomplished on these

¹ Jerem. xxxiv. 8—20.

miserable men. These things at once explain the transaction between God and Abraham which we are now considering. The "smoking furnace" and "burning lamp" which passed between the parts of the heifer, the she-goat and the ram, were, beyond all question, the emblems of the Divine Majesty.

ALMIGHTY GOD THEN (amazing condescension!) PASSED IN THESE EMBLEMS, BETWEEN THE PARTED SACRIFICE, declaring by the significant act, AS TRULY AS I LIVE, AS TRULY AS I CANNOT DIE, AS TRULY AS I CANNOT BE CUT ASUNDER, SO TRULY WILL I PERFORM MY WORD. Was not this swearing by himself? And what was the word which this sacrificial oath confirmed? It was the promise, as the words already quoted from the book of Genesis declare expressly, that Abraham should be the father of a seed as numerous as the stars of heaven, and that this seed should inherit Canaan. Let us compare this with the text. It tells us that God swore by himself that Abraham should be blessed and multiplied. It is evident that these statements are in all respects the same. The words then which were uttered on Mount Moriah were not the first divine adjuration with which the patriarch was favoured, but a repetition of one which had gone before. We may gather this indeed from the words themselves, "By myself have I sworn."¹ As if he meant to convey to the patriarch this delightful intimation—I swear before that I would bless and multiply you, and now I repeat my oath; you have proved by the obedience of this day, that you are worthy of my blessing.

St. Paul tells us finally, that Abraham, having received this promise and having had it so solemnly confirmed, "patiently endured" and at last "obtained" it. For ten long years his confidence was sustained by the promise only. But at the end of that period the half-querulous expostulation, "Lord God, I go childless,"² intimated that faith was wavering. He received in answer to this, as we have already seen, the confirmation of the oath, by which his confidence was revived and upheld for fifteen years longer. They must have been years of singular trial. During four-

¹ Genesis xxii. 16.

² xv. 2.

teen of them he had no communications from on high ;¹ his marriage with Hagar, by which he had hoped to obtain the promised seed, proved only bitterness and disappointment, and every year was diminishing the probability that Sarah should ever become a mother. But God's eye had been on this patient endurance, and it was at length rewarded. He visited Sarah "as he had said," and she bare to the patriarch "a son in his old age." The patriarch was an hundred years old, and his aged partner was ninety, when this child of promise was born. And so astonishing in these circumstances, was the mercy of his birth, that the joyful mother exclaimed, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me."² This was commemorated in the name of the child ; for Isaac signifies laughter, gladness of heart. The language of the text then is most perfectly natural. Aged Simeon did not live to see the salvation of God perfected, for that salvation in its perfectness, is not yet revealed. Nevertheless, beholding in the infant of Bethlehem the germ of God's mighty purposes and the certain pledge of their accomplishment, "he took him in his arms, and blessed God, and said...mine eyes have seen thy salvation."³ And we may well conceive that Abraham's feelings on the day of Isaac's circumcision, were the same. He did not live to see his seed multiplied and every thing fulfilled of which God had spoken to him ; but yet, as he took the child in his arms, he could say with most perfect truth, after patient endurance, Lord, I have obtained thy promise.

And now ye Hebrews, says St. Paul, when your faith and patience are about to fail, when you are tempted to think that your course of trial is needlessly protracted and that God has forgotten you, remember your father Abraham. See in him a pattern of faith and patience, see in him the faithfulness of God. Let every tempted and exercised Christian take the same comfort from this patriarch's history ; for Abraham is our father also.⁴ And blessed be God, there

¹ Genesis xvi. 16. xvii. 1.

² xxi. 1—6.

³ Luke ii. 27—30.

⁴ Romans iv. 16.

is even yet greater consolation stored up for us in his dealings with Abraham. All the promises which were made to him, had a double reference, first to his natural seed and to the earthly Canaan; second to his spiritual seed, Christ and his believing people, and to the kingdom of glory which is their destined inheritance. The same thing is true of the oaths. In the sacrificial oath which has now been expounded, and in the verbal oath on Mount Moriah, God swore by himself, not only that the Jews should be multiplied and should inherit Canaan, but that the spiritual seed should be a multitude which no man could number, that they should inherit God's blessing and should enter at last into his rest. This will appear very plainly when we now proceed with the text.

II. *For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.*

It is the custom among men, says St. Paul, to "swear by the greater," and when there is any strife between man and man, such "an oath for confirmation" settles it. But God, he continues, is "more abundantly" desirous "to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability" of his purpose to bless them, than any man can be to assure his fellow of his faithfulness. And therefore, observing that this is the way among men, he has adopted it in his adorable condescension, confirming with an oath his words of grace and mercy. Those whom God has thus determined to bless, are the people who believe in Jesus. For they are Christ's, and the promise to Abraham, "a God to thee and to thy seed,"¹ descends and terminates on them. St. Paul teaches this most distinctly, in his epistles both to the Romans and

¹ Genesis xvii. 7.

Galatians. To the Romans he says that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had: . . . that he might be the father of all them that believe: . . . that righteousness might be imputed unto them also."¹ And to the Galatians he says, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham:" and again, "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."² To explain to us also how it is that we are the children of Abraham and are blessed with him, he adds, "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."³ For Christ is that seed whom God promised to give to Abraham and to bless eternally; and in Christ his people are included. This gracious purpose of God to bless the heirs of promise, has been confirmed, as the text assures us, "by an oath." St. Paul refers evidently to the oath sworn to Abraham. There is no other oath to assure the believer of salvation; and those who are heirs of the patriarch's promises must be heirs also of the irrefragable oath which confirms them. The "smoking furnace" and "burning lamp" were God's oath to Abraham that his seed should inherit Canaan. This, no doubt, had a fulfilment when Israel left Egypt under the conduct of Moses, and were put in possession of that land by Joshua.⁴ But another fulfilment awaits it; St. Paul declares expressly that this seed was Christ, and adds in reference to this very transaction, that the covenant which was thus "confirmed before of God unto Christ," could not afterwards be annulled by the law.⁵ We have already seen that Canaan in the day of glory, is the destined inheritance of Jesus and his people. This therefore was the covenant which was then confirmed unto Christ. And when the Son of God shall appear and his saved ones along with him, this oath and the oath on Mount Moriah shall have their final and eternal accomplishment. For the saved shall be "as the dust of the earth," as the sand of the sea, "as the stars of the sky in multitude," and Jesus "the Lord of Hosts"

¹ Rom. iv. 11.² Galat. iii. 7, 9.³ verse 29.⁴ Gen. xv. 13—16.⁵ Galat. iii. 16, 17. Original.

with whom they come to inherit, "shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients, gloriously."¹

God has then sworn by himself, that Jesus and his believing people shall "be glorified together."² This counsel is immutable, and is expressed in "two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie." These are the promise and the oath: he cannot forget his promise, and it is an eternal impossibility that he should break his solemn oath. And we therefore, adds the Apostle, may have "strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on this hope set before us." But the promise and hope of which St. Paul here speaks, are merely the expression and confirmation to us of this immutable counsel. What really renders it immutable is something far deeper, even that which induced the Almighty thus to promise and thus to swear. The Son is the object of the Father's eternal love; it is therefore the Father's eternal purpose to glorify the Son for ever. Nothing can change this mind in God, nothing can alter this purpose; they are as immutable as the Everlasting himself. But Christ's people are in the sight of the Father, one with the Son their Saviour. The love which embraces him rests therefore on them also,³ and their glory is necessarily provided for in that purpose which has determined on his. Here then indeed is strong consolation for as many as have made Christ their hope. Nothing can separate from the Saviour those who unfeignedly trust in him. And he with whom they are one, is the possessor of the Father's love, and heir of his unchangeable promises.

Before leaving this precious subject, let me remark further that to strengthen this hope in us, and to fill us with this consolation, we have already witnessed the begun accomplishment of this promise and oath of God. In the case of a covenant by sacrifice, only the contracting parties passed between the parts of the calf Abraham therefore did not pass between them on the occasion to which we have been referring; the covenant was confirmed "of God unto Christ;" the Father and Son were the contracting parties. And the

¹ Isai. xxiv. 23.² Romans viii. 17.³ John xvii. 23.

"smoking furnace" and "burning lamp" were the significant emblems, the one of the Son's bitter passion, the other of the Father's everlasting promises. The Son swore on his part to become the seed of Abraham, to suffer, to die and to descend into the grave on man's behalf. And the light of glory was to succeed and chase away the darkness of this transient agony; the Father swore on his part to be a God to this seed of Abraham, to raise the Son from the dead, to exalt him to his own right hand, and to instal him as the true Melchizedec, King and Priest for ever. These blessed contracting parties, have so far, even already, fulfilled this solemn oath. The Son of God has appeared in the world, clothed with mortal flesh, "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."¹ He has passed through the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane, he has borne our sins in his own body on the tree on the hill of Calvary, he has gone down for our sakes into the dust of death. And the Father has raised him from the dead, has exalted him to the right hand of the heavenly Majesty, and has committed to him all power both in heaven and on earth. This indeed is not all: the light of the "burning lamp" discovers other visions of glory. Jesus has yet to be revealed in kingly majesty, he has yet to raise his sleeping saints, to change those who are waiting for him into the likeness of his glory, to bind Satan, to judge the earth, to bring in the new creation, to plant his eternal throne and to seat his saints beside him. But what has been accomplished, is the pledge of that which remains. And when we think on the bitter cross and glorious resurrection of our Saviour, and contemplate the faithfulness of the Father and the Son in the begun accomplishment of their solemn, mutual oath, we may well trust them for the final and eternal accomplishment of all to which they have sworn.

Lift up your heads then, ye Hebrews, says St. Paul, and be not dismayed by the tribulations of a day. Remember the oath which God swore to your Father Abraham; remember that if your trust is in Christ, that oath, with all its assurance of blessing, descends and terminates on you. The

¹ Matthew i. 1.

oath which excluded your unbelieving fathers from God's rest,¹ was not more certain of accomplishment. You have taken "the breast-plate of faith and love,"² and you have done well; take also, "for an helmet, the hope of salvation."³ So shall the enemy attempt in vain to terrify you from faithful adherence to your Saviour and confession of his name; sustained by the "strong consolation" of his glorious promises, you shall be more than conquerors in the evil day.

III. St. Paul next enlarges on the eternal security of this promise and oath of God.

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high-priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.

Hope in God's eternal mercy, hope which stays itself on his promise and on his oath, is here called "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." No image can be more beautiful or more consoling. The sureness and steadfastness of an anchor depends on its having caught hold of something which is immovable. *This* anchor is therefore sure and steadfast; "it entereth into that"—its grappling iron has caught hold on the immovable things "within the veil." These were the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and God himself upon the mercy-seat. And hope, to drop the figure, stays itself on God's covenant of plighted mercy revealed in his dear Son, and lays hold on God who has revealed that mercy and sworn to observe that covenant. Can any of these give way? Can the covenant of God be dishonoured? Can his mercy ratified by oath, prove to him who trusts in it a broken reed? Can He who has framed the covenant and sworn to the mercy, ever deny himself? No; these things cannot be. Christian hope then is indeed an anchor both sure and steadfast. Let the tempest blow ever so high, let the tide run ever so strong, our frail vessel, if we only slip not our cable, cannot be drifted on the rocks. "Cast not away

¹ Hebrews iv. 3.

² Hebrews vi. 2, 10.

³ I Thes. v. 8.

therefore your confidence," says the Apostle, "which hath great recompense of reward."¹

And a more precious consideration yet remains. How shall we, miserable sinners, presume to cast our anchor within the veil, to trust in God's covenant, to hope in his eternal mercy, and to take to ourselves the consolation of his oaths? Because he who died for us has entered on our behalf into "that terrible and sacred darkness," and is now sprinkling before the mercy-seat, for those who trust in him, his blood of everlasting efficacy. He has entered moreover as our "forerunner;" implying that we shall one day follow him. His Father and his God, who sits between the cherubim, is our Father and our God also, and his immediate presence is our destined eternal home. And though he who has thus entered for us as High-Priest be now concealed from our view, the day is at hand when, arrayed in kingly Majesty, he shall come forth to invite us in. Sinners as we are then, we may cast anchor within the veil. It is no presumption to do so; Jesus is there; Jesus, who has made the peace of the sinful, and who is able to make them meet both in soul and body for the blissful presence of God. And as long as he, the true Melchizedec, fills the eternal throne, none shall be ashamed or confounded who have made Him their confidence and stay.

But St. Paul, in his words which we are now considering, had especial reference to the outward condition and spiritual state of those to whom he was writing.

The tempest was indeed at this time blowing high, and the tide running strong against them. Their brethren after the flesh persecuted, reviled, and excommunicated them; and not content with this, denounced them to the heathen magistrates. And whilst they had these things to contend with on the one hand, they were plied on the other, with every form of argument and persuasion to return to the religion of their fathers, whose gorgeous ritual and heaven-appointed institutions they had from infancy been taught to venerate. They were therefore in imminent danger of making shipwreck of faith. This accounts for the peculiar figure employed in the

¹ Hebrews x. 35.

verses before us, and also for the earnestness with which, throughout this chapter, the Apostle exhorts them to give all diligence to attain the full assurance of hope. One would have thought that the considerations suggested in the preceding verses concerning the promise and oath of God, were sufficient for this purpose. But the Apostle had a peculiar reason for reminding them that the hope which he was seeking to strengthen in their hearts, cast its anchor within the vail where the true Melchizedec was appearing before God. For this was the very point at which, as I have already stated, the Hebrews stood still. Judaism yet mingled with their Christianity; they had not learned to lift their eyes and hearts from the sons of Aaron in the temple below, to their glorious antitype above. But as long as this is the case with you, St. Paul would convey to them in the words before us, you never can attain to this hope of which I speak. Rise then, I conjure you, from the shadows to the substance; stay yourselves on the intercession of him who appears for you above, and no earthly violence can possibly overwhelm you. Hope will also in its turn, increase and strengthen love; consciously upheld by the intercession of your Saviour, you will cheerfully hazard your lives for his precious name. And think of the future reward which shall recompense present suffering. MELCHIZEDEC intercedes for you; he who shall shortly appear as King, to receive his people to himself. Let this hope fill your hearts, and you will esteem as nothing the "light affliction" of "this present time." Besides, it "is but for a moment."¹ Soon shall the tempest cease, which now sits upon your sails; soon shall the angry waters subside which now threaten to engulf you. And God shall give to you a safe and quiet entrance into the haven of eternal rest.

We learn from this subject, the eternal security of the believer. When the oath of the Everlasting is dishonoured, *when it is possible for God to lie*, the believer in Christ may perish; TILL THEN, HE CANNOT. And we learn also from it, who the believer is. He is one who has "fled for refuge"

¹ II Corinthians, iv. 17.

to lay hold on the hope set before him. We shall never flee for refuge till we feel ourselves undone. The poor publican who had only a life of dishonesty and extortion to look back upon,—the thief on the cross who had only a retrospect of crime,—the heathen jailor at Philippi—these fled for refuge. And between us and them there is in the sight of God “no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”¹ Would we be heirs then of the believer’s blessedness and security, this is the strait gate and narrow way which leads to it; we must confess ourselves undone. If we will not receive salvation on these terms, we must find it as best we may; we have nothing to do with the promise and oath of the text; they are designed exclusively for such as “have fled for refuge.”

“For Christ as soon will abdicate his own
As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne.”

Let us have grace then to stoop our pride, and to bring down every high thought to the obedience of Christ; and “worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness,” we shall “obtain from the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Which may he of his infinite mercy grant!

¹ Romans II. 22, 23.

(See Appendix, Note G.)

LECTURE VIII.

Hebrews vi. 20. vii. 1—10.

"Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. For this Melchizedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham; but he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedec met him."

WE have been following St. Paul through the last four lectures, in his reproof and admonition of the Hebrews. He has found fault with them for standing still at the principles of the doctrine of Christ; he has warned them that this is often the indication of that superficial religion which ends in

hopeless apostacy; and while declaring his persuasion that their religion was not of this transient kind, he has entreated them not to rest satisfied with what they had attained, but to press after the full assurance of hope. To encourage them to the exercise of this hope he has reminded them of the faithfulness of God to their father Abraham; that the same faithfulness pledged in solemn oath was the guarantee of his promises now; and that the entrance of the true Melchizedec into the holiest of all on their behalf, was a still further assurance that these promises and oaths should be remembered. The mention of this last glorious truth recalls St. Paul to his argument. He had been handling, before this digression, the subject of Christ's priesthood, he had proved that in his call, his qualifications, and his functions, he was the antitype of the Jewish priests: and he now returns to take up these points in detail. The verses which we have just read, are devoted to Christ's CALL. The antitype is infinitely superior to all his types; and St. Paul therefore proves from the terms of it that our heavenly High-Priest is exalted far above the sons of Aaron. He also adduces it to explain what offended the Hebrews, viz., why this heavenly priesthood is an immediate gift from above, instead of being by succession, like that to which they had been accustomed. With these introductory remarks I will now attempt a paraphrase of the sense of the text.*

I proved to you, my brethren, says St. Paul, out of your own Scriptures, that Christ is "called of God an High-Priest, after the order of Melchizedec," and I told you that of this Melchizedec I had "many things to say." These things I will now seek to lay before you. This distinguished type of the Messiah was, as Scripture tell us, "king of Salem," and "priest of the most high God." He "met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings" who

* If the reader wishes to follow St. Paul's argument without interruption, he may read this and the following Lectures immediately after Lecture III, omitting the Digression, which may be read by itself. The text of the apostle connects,—“called of God an High-Priest after the order of Melchizedec. of whom we have many things to say. for this Melchizedec, King of Salem,” &c. And the argument is strictly consecutive.

invaded Canaan, "and blessed him;" Abraham also gave to him a tenth part of all the spoils which he had taken from them.¹ His name and the seat of his kingdom are both full of instruction; for *Melchizedec* signifies *King of righteousness*, and *King of Salem* signifies *King of peace*. His priesthood is especially to be observed; it was conferred on him not by descent, but by the immediate appointment of God. For he was without priestly father, without mother of sacerdotal race, and without sacerdotal descent. It was also in another feature, utterly unlike the priesthood of the sons of Aaron. For they commence the duties of their office at the age of thirty years, and cease from them at the age of fifty.² But he, that he might be a type of the Son of God, had neither appointed beginning nor appointed end of priestly days; being made priest by the immediate appointment of heaven, he continued priest whilst he lived. Consider, my brethren, St. Paul continues, what these things teach you. You acknowledge our father Abraham to be superior to all his children, and therefore to Aaron and his sons. How great then must this Melchizedec have been, whom even Abraham acknowledged as his superior, by giving to him the tenth of the spoils! You are aware that this was an acknowledgment of superiority. For you know that those sons of Levi, "who receive the office of the priesthood," are thereby elevated above their brethren of the seed of Abraham, and "have a commandment to take tithes" from them on this very account. But the history which we have just been considering, tells us that he whose descent and dignity is derived not from Levi but from God, accepted the tithes which Abraham brought to him. Nor was this all. Though Abraham "had the promises," though out of his loins the Messiah was to come, though in him as the father of God's Christ all the families of the earth were to be blessed, Melchizedec "blessed him." Now, "without all contradiction," according to the rules of every society, civil and sacred, "the less is blessed of the better." The child is blessed by the parent, the servant by the master, the flock of God by the

¹ Genesis xiv. 18—20.² Numbers iv. 3, 34—49; viii. 23—26.

minister, the subject by his king; for blessing always descends from the greater, and never can ascend from the less. Melchizedec must therefore have been Abraham's superior; if he had not been so, he could not have presumed to bless him. In the case moreover of your priests, it greatly abates from the dignity which the tithe acknowledges that the receivers of tithes hold an office which ceases and determines; but in the case of Melchizedec, the receiver was one to whom a perpetual priesthood belonged. And to use a bold figure of speech, Levi also, who in the persons of his sons receives tithes, and whose superiority is thus acknowledged by his brethen, himself acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedec. For he paid tithes to him in Abraham, in whose loins he was on the day "when Melchizedec met him."

I believe that in this paraphrase of the text, I have given the meaning and explained the argument of St. Paul. The explanation however is attended with very great difficulties. The peculiar language here used concerning Melchizedec, viz. that he was without father, mother, or descent, that he had neither beginning of days nor end of life, has given rise to many questions; and some have even supposed from it, that this distinguished worthy of Old Testament history was the Son of God in the appearance of a man. But not to mention the prodigious difficulties which attend this solution, the language of the text forbids it, for it tells us expressly that this king and priest of old time was "made like unto," i.e. was an appointed type of "the Son of God." Melchizedec ranks therefore in this respect with Aaron, David, Solomon and the other types of Messiah; for no one can be a type of himself. Besides, St. Paul cannot mean that Melchizedec was literally without father, mother, or descent; that he had literally neither beginning of days nor end of life; such a statement, as we shall see immediately, would have been of no service in his argument. These expressions, to be of any service to it, must have a figurative meaning; and the expressions "die" and "liveth" in the eighth verse have manifestly the same. I believe, from what is stated concerning him in the book of Genesis,

that Melchizedec was a Canaanite, that he was king of Jerusalem, and priest, by immediate Divine appointment, "of the most high God." We have no record when this priesthood commenced, and he seems to have held the holy office during the term of his natural life. He seems to have known Abraham, and to have been aware of his true character: and Abraham seems to have been equally acquainted with him. When these worthies met therefore after the slaughter of the kings, the patriarch at once acknowledged himself to be the inferior: and Melchizedec, accepting the acknowledgment, gave to Abraham the superior's blessing. These things were arranged and ordered in the wisdom of God, as types of things to come. The Hebrews were well acquainted with them as historical facts, for they were written in their own Scriptures. But St. Paul had been taught of God to know their spiritual meaning. And he makes most signal use of such knowledge in his present unanswerable argument.

In the light of these remarks I will now sum up this argument. To the Hebrew objection that none could be greater than Aaron, it opposed *the scripture-doctrine* that Messiah was High-Priest after the order of Melchizedec, combined with *the scripture-fact* that Melchizedec was greater than Abraham, the patriarch of Aaron's family. To the kindred objection that this new priesthood was utterly unlike God's former appointments, because it was not derived by succession, as the old priesthood had been, it opposed *another scripture-fact*, viz. that he whose priesthood was a foreshewing of Messiah's, had, as priest, neither father, mother, nor descent. And finally, the objection that this new priesthood did not observe the times of the old, was silenced by *the fact* that the priesthood of Melchizedec had "neither beginning of days nor end of life." No Hebrew could meet this argument. Jealous as he was for the honour of Aaron, he could not exalt him above Abraham. And however earnestly he desired the preservation of heaven-appointed institutions, he could not gainsay these express and positive declarations of the sacred Scripture.

But we must not be satisfied with merely sketching an argument: let us return upon the text, and give to all its inspired declarations the attention which they deserve. Following faithfully the exposition of St. Paul, we meet with Jesus, the true king of righteousness and peace, in "MELCHIZEDEC, KING OF SALEM." "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots;" "the man whose name is the Branch, shall sit and rule upon his throne."¹ "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth:" "righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." The prophet then describes the righteousness and peace of his kingdom. "The wolf" in that day, in his magnificent language, "shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." "The cow and the bear shall" also "feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." Yea, "the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den." A voice from the oracle proclaims, "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."² From this amazingly clear and distinct prophecy we learn many things. We learn that the earth shall be the seat of Messiah's kingdom; the earth inhabited, as now it is, by men, women and children, by beasts and creeping things. But there shall be this blessed difference: it shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and sin shall be driven out of it. He who shall pass through it on that day shall see the ground beneath him diversified in hill and dale, the skies above him, the air surrounding him, all as now they are; he shall look also on the same human countenances, the same forms of man and beast. But yet all shall be different. Every human heart, every human family, every human society, shall then be the abode of righteousness and peace, and even the instincts of the animals shall be changed;

¹ Zechariah vi. 12, 13.² Isaiah xi. 1-9.

harm and mischief from one creature of God to another shall be a thing unheard, yea unconceived of, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The earth's present history, if remembered at all in that day, shall be remembered only as a frightful dream. The true Melchizedec shall then have taken his seat, and his omnipotent fiat shall have made "all things NEW."¹

St. Paul tells us further concerning Melchizedec that he "met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him." I feel assured that when God, to use the language of the prophet, gave these kings to the sword of the patriarch, "and as driven stubble to his bow,"² it was a foreshewing of things to come. For we read among the promises to Abraham's believing children "he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers."³ And we read again in the Psalms, "let the saints be joyful in glory,...let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron: this honour have all his saints."⁴ This promise shall beyond question be fulfilled; Jesus, having raised his people from their graves, shall bring them with him to the judgment of a guilty world. St. John saw its fulfilment in prophetic vision. "I saw heaven opened," he tells us, "and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True...and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God...And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." This language declares with sufficient plainness the nature of the dreadful errand on which Jesus shall then come to the earth. And mark how he is accompanied. "The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

¹ Rev. xxi. 5. ² Isaiah xli. 2. ³ Rev. ii. 26, 27. ⁴ Psalm cxlix. 5—9.

These white-robed armies are Christ's redeemed people, for we read just before, that the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."¹ To them therefore, as to their father Abraham, it shall be given to "tread down the wicked" as "ashes under the soles of their feet."² Let us observe also the blessing with which Melchizedec blessed the patriarch when he returned from the slaughter of his enemies. He said, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth."³ And in thus blessing "him...that had the promises," he recognized him as lord of Canaan and "heir of the world,"⁴ by gift and grant of the Most High. The true Melchizedec shall in like manner bless the heirs of these promises in the coming day of vengeance and of glory. "Come, ye blessed of my Father," he shall say to them, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you."⁵ To inherit the kingdom is not merely to live for ever as Christ's subjects and to serve him; it is also to be exalted to reign beside him. His believing people, the armies in heaven which follow him, are at once kings and subjects; and therefore, he their Prince and Captain "hath a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords."⁶ He shall exalt these beggars from the dunghill (oh amazing grace!) and seat them on his own throne: he shall grant to them to sway along with him his sceptre of righteousness and peace. His Father and their Father, "the Lord of heaven and earth,"⁷ has prepared this kingdom for them from the foundation of the world: and at the command of Jesus they shall take possession of its dignities, governing for the glory of God and the blessedness of his creatures, wherever his name is known and his vast universe extends.

But we shall not dwell on this at present; let us hasten to a kindred subject. St. Paul tells us that this king of Salem was also "priest of the most high God." And his glorious antitype is in like manner, "made an High-Priest for ever." But Christ monopolizes no dignity; he shares every thing with his people. A crown therefore is not their

¹ Rev. xix. 8, 11—15. ² Mal. iv. 3. ³ Gen. xiv. 19. ⁴ Romans iv. 13.

⁵ Matthew xxv. 34. ⁶ Revelations xix. 16. ⁷ Matthew xi. 25.

sole inheritance; a mitre is in reserve for them besides. "Unto him that loved us," says St. John, "and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory."¹ And again, in the song of the redeemed above, the priesthood is joined with the kingdom. "Thou wast slain," is their acknowledgment, "and hast redeemed us to God...and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth."² We have had many opportunities of considering the kingdom of the saints; but the kindred glorious theme of their priesthood has never yet been brought under our notice. Now however we cannot pass it by; for the Scripture before us directly contains it. And I feel thankful that it does so; we cannot better bestow our attention than on a subject so rich both in glory and in blessedness.

St. Peter writes to the believers of the dispersion, "Ye are a royal priesthood," that ye should "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."³ This, say some, is the priesthood of the saints; they serve God by his grace given to them, and their works and pious labours are "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing" in his sight.⁴ This statement, so far as it goes, is doubtless true. To offer ourselves to God in the power of his blessed Spirit, is in one sense to act as priests, just as when we keep our passions and appetites in subjection, we in one sense, act as kings. For "he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."⁵ But such a priesthood and such a kingdom are not surely the fulfilment of the magnificent imagery of God's word: to say that they are so, is, I believe, to expose that word to ridicule. Besides, in saying so, men strain and wrest its meaning. Those Scriptures which have now been cited, and many others like them, describe these dignities of God's people in their present embryo state; they are not designed to inform us what they shall be when the glory of God is revealed. But these dignities derive their

¹ Revel. i. 5, 6.² Revel. v. 9, 10.³ I Peter, ii. 5, 9.⁴ Phillip iv. 18.⁵ Proverbs xvi. 32.

chief value from their connection with this day of glory ; at present, in comparison, they are nothing. Every reference in the Apocalypse to the priesthood of the saints, carries our thoughts forward to the coming of Christ, and describes it as a dignity which shall then be conferred on his people. Let us reverently inquire then into the nature of this dignity, not trusting to our own imaginations but searching God's infallible word.

No Scripture contains greater light on this matter of deep and solemn interest than the Scripture which is now before us. We are told that the true Melchizedec has entered as God's High-Priest, into the holiest of all above. We are also told that he has entered as our forerunner, implying that we shall one day follow and minister beside him there. We cannot fully understand these statements without referring to the tabernacle of Moses. It had three apartments, viz. the outer court into which any Israelite might enter, the holy place in which the priests exercised their ministry, and the holiest of all which was for the high-priest alone. This arrangement was made by God's express command ; " See," he said to Moses, " that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." It is therefore needless to say that it had an important spiritual meaning. It was an " example and shadow of heavenly things,"¹ containing " the rudiments of the world,"² i. e. of the world to come, the heavenly kingdom. The revelation of this kingdom then shall introduce a threefold condition of things. The new Jerusalem, the habitation of the risen saints, which is lightened by the glory of God and of the Lamb,³ manifestly answers to the holiest of all. But there is a condition inferior to this, which yet is one of blessedness and of glory. For having described the new Jerusalem, the Apostle adds immediately that " the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it," and that " the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." And again he says that " they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it," and that " the leaves of the tree " of life which

¹ Hebrews viii. 5.² Colossians ii. 20.³ Revelations xxi. 22, 23.

grows within its sacred confines, shall be "for the healing of the nations."¹ To understand these prophecies of the New Testament, we must turn back to those of the Old. For the New Testament-seers are chiefly occupied in setting forth the heavenly, resurrection-glory which shall follow Messiah's advent; whilst those of the Old Testament, to whom such fulness of light was not vouchsafed, describe more fully the earthly glories of his reign. They tell us with one voice that he shall be King over all the earth, that the seed of Abraham in flesh and blood shall be nearer to him than any nation, and that in and through them all nations shall be blessed. In referring to the words of these prophets the only difficulty is selection. Let us listen to Isaiah. "Strangers," he says to Israel, "shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double."² He says of Jerusalem, "the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory...thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."³ He says again, "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, all ye that love her,...for I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream."⁴ Not to mention Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and their fellows, let me only refer further to the words of Zechariah. "Many people and strong nations," he tells us, "shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord." For "in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you."⁵ This nearness to God enjoyed by Israel in that day *as his priests and ministers* answers then, I conceive, to the nearness of the holy place. While the outer court, the place of those to *whom no ministry*

¹ Revel. xxi. 24, 26; xxii. 2. ² Isaiah lxi. 5—7. ³ Isaiah lxii. 2, 3.

⁴ Isaiah lxvi. 10, 12. ⁵ Zechariah viii. 22, 23.

was entrusted, sets forth the condition of the other nations of the earth. They shall not be privileged with the nearness to God which is enjoyed by the Jew, but they shall nevertheless be blessed in and through Israel; learning from Jewish teaching and example, to fear God and keep his commandments. The Scriptures which we have already quoted, declare this distinctly. Taking hold of the skirt of a Jew, coming up to pray before the Lord in Jerusalem, calling the seed of Abraham the ministers of our God; all these are plain intimations of an obedient and subject world. Besides, Isaiah tells us expressly that Israel shall have the honour of declaring God's "glory among the Gentiles,"¹ that "the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem;"² and that as the fruit of this Jewish teaching, "all flesh shall come and worship" before him.³ The Jews and Gentiles then are the nations who shall walk in the age to come, in the light of the new Jerusalem; and the Jewish and Gentile monarchs are the kings who shall bring their glory and honour into it. And thus in the tabernacle of Moses, we discern the world to come, and the distribution of its glories. We have first, Jesus and his risen saints dwelling with the invisible Father in the holiest of all. We have second, Israel after the flesh, acting as God's ministers in the holy place. And we have third, the other nations of the earth blessed with Jewish teaching and example, keeping the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In the light of these glorious truths we may apprehend the priesthood of the saints. The legal high-priest who alone of all the sons of Israel might enter into the holiest of all, was privileged to bear into God's presence the offerings and prayers of his people, and to return again from that presence, to bless them in God's name. And this, as a type of things to come, instructs us what shall be hereafter. The nations which shall walk in the light of the new Jerusalem, and after them all the other creatures of God, shall be beyond question, in the day of glory, the subjects of

¹ Isaiah lxvi. 19.² Isaiah ii. 3.³ Isaiah lxvi. 23.

Jesus and his saints. And it is for the benefit of the same nations and of the same creatures that their priestly ministry shall be exercised. Jesus is now exercising this ministry in his own person. The bosom of the Father is the true holiest; he came out of that bosom at the first, and has now returned into it again. And he abides in that sacred place, the Mediator and High Priest, by whom prayer reaches God and blessing reaches man. But in the age to come he shall associate his people with him. And abiding where he abides, even in the bosom of God, they shall be privileged to bear for ever into the presence of the invisible Father, the thanksgivings, the adorations, the prayers of his whole creation. They shall be privileged also to bear forth the answer to these prayers, to pour upon the obedient and grateful creature, the fulness of his Creator's blessing. Oh glorious ministry of love! Well said the inspired seer, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection...they shall be priests of God and of Christ."¹ Jesus shall fit them for its exercise. He shall give them his own heart of love, that they may delight in this ministry of love; his own tongue of eloquence, that they may plead in the courts above; his own open-handed munificence, that they may be good stewards of the manifold liberality of God. Then shall the vision of Jacob's ladder be fulfilled. For in that day of glory we shall "see heaven opened and the angels of God," Christ's glorified saints, passing between heaven and earth continually on their errands of priestly mercy, "ascending and descending on the Son of man."² And then also, when our Divine High-Priest and his people are thus "glorified together," shall we see the meaning of the word "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."³

Such is the blessedness and such the glory which our Father has provided for his children; such are the contents of the word "kings and priests unto God." Jesus hath ever the pre-eminence, for the eternal throne belongs to him and the blood of the sacrifice is his. But he has promised to us

¹ Revel. xx. 6.² Genesis xxviii. 12; John i. 51; Revel. xxii. 8, 9.³ Romans viii. 17.

who trust in that sacrifice and receive his holy Spirit, that we shall bear rule in his name for ever, and be ministers of blessing for ever to that creation which he has redeemed. Our guarantee that it shall be so, that these honours indeed await us, is that he has entered into the holiest and has taken possession of them; for he has done this as our **FORERUNNER**. Most blessed, most consoling word! It tells us that though our elder brother has distanced us his younger brethren in the race, and got first into the presence of our Father, he has carried with him the intelligence that we are on the road. He has also become security for us that we shall arrive in safety. For the Father has committed to his keeping every believing soul. He said on earth "those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost."¹ And he says now in heaven, concerning every one who has made the Father's mercy his confidence, "if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever."² Well then may we "run with patience the race that is set before us!" Let us run, "looking unto Jesus;"³ He ran it first, and his strength shall never fail us.

And now let us ask in conclusion, What shall we render to this Lord and Saviour for all his benefits towards us? The text contains an answer to this question: Abraham rendered to Melchizedec "the tenth part of all." This tenth was the holy portion, and was an acknowledgement on the part of the offerer, that the whole was at the disposal of him to whom it was rendered. Let us deal then with the true Melchizedec as Abraham dealt with his type; let us render to him, in acknowledgment of his boundless mercy, the "tenth part of all." I use these words, in the first place, in their literal meaning. The ordinance of the tithe was "not of Moses but of the fathers;" Abraham lived before the days of Moses and knew nothing of his law. We who are Abraham's children by faith are therefore called upon to follow his example, rendering to God the tenth of our yearly increase, in devout acknowledgement that for all our peace in this life and hopes for the life to come, we are indebted to his eternal

¹ John xvii. 12.² Genesis xliii. 9.³ Hebrews xii. 1, 2.

mercy. Would to God, that the charities of Christian men bore this proportion to their means! Then should the Church of God, the spiritual and temporal wants of our brethren at home, and the wants of the heathen abroad, be otherwise provided for than they are. But we must not be satisfied with merely giving this tenth of our increase; let us remember in the second place, the significant meaning of such an act. It is a heartfelt acknowledgment that we who give it, are with all which we are and have, absolutely at God's disposal and ready to be used by him, as he pleases, for his glory. God graciously accepts this poor offering, because it is our all. And he has been pleased, on many occasions, to try the sincerity of his people, calling on them to part with their substance, with their reputation, with their hopes in this world, yea with life itself, for his holy gospel and for the salvation of men. The first confessors of the faith nobly stood this trial, and many in every age have by God's grace followed their example. He may not ask from us such a proof of sincerity, but he asks the heart which would give it, if required. And this heart will shew itself by our grudging no sacrifice for his service, by our living for one object only, viz., that his name may be glorified and man's salvation advanced by all which we think or do or say. Such a heart, let me observe, is not only our meet return for the Saviour's mercy, it is our preparation also for those glories which that Saviour has prepared for us. For the blessedness of being made kings and priests is the blessedness of being *exalted to do good*; exalted to glorify God and to bless his creatures. And our preparation for such dignity is our living for these objects now. Living now that we may hallow God's name, living that we may be a help, a shield, and a blessing to each other, we are educated by the holy discipline of this world for the glories of the world to come. May God give us to set our hearts on these glories, and grant us this spiritual meetness for their endless enjoyment!

LECTURE IX.

Hebrews vii. 11—22.

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord swears and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec:) by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."

THE object of St. Paul, in the first twenty two verses of this chapter, is to prove to the Hebrews that he who is "called of God an High-Priest after the order of Melchizedec" is better than the legal high-priests of the order of Aaron.

They acknowledged that Aaron was inferior to Abraham : this proof has therefore naturally commenced, as we saw in the last lecture, with a demonstration out of their own Scriptures, that Abraham was inferior to Melchizedec. And lest they should say that though Melchizedec might be superior in personal dignity, Aaron was superior as priest, the Apostle in the verses which we have just read, follows up and concludes his argument ; demonstrating by three unanswerable reasons, that the priesthood "after the order of Melchizedec" is immeasurably superior to that which was entrusted to Aaron. He reminds them first, that God spake of raising up this priesthood, while that of Aaron yet existed. He points out in the second place, that while the priesthood of Aaron was thus shewn to be temporary, the other was expressly declared to be eternal. And he draws their attention in the third place, to the inspired declaration that this priesthood was established by an oath, contrasting it with the acknowledged fact that the priests of Aaron's family had no such solemn consecration. Let it not escape our notice, that this entire argument is based on a single verse of the Old Testament-Scriptures, viz. the fourth verse of the hundred and tenth Psalm. The statement of that verse is uncorroborated by any other from Genesis to Malachi ; and yet St. Paul rests on it the whole weight of this all-important demonstration. The argumentative theologians of the present day would have objected to the Apostle that he could cite only one text. The Hebrews however were better acquainted with the value of Scripture. And let us learn from this argument to understand the principle with which they were so familiar, and which lies at the bottom of all sound scriptural interpretation, viz. that what God has said only once is as true as if he had declared it a thousand times.

Let us now enter on the detailed exposition of the text. St. Paul's first proof of the inferiority of Aaron to Christ, is that God spake of raising up Christ's priesthood, while that of Aaron yet existed.

If MOREOVER perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for in CONNECTION with it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

The verses which have just been read, as we learn from the word "moreover," are not a deduction from the preceding argument, but that argument followed out. St. Paul would also remind the Hebrews of the connection between the priesthood and the law, that they might comprehend the reasoning which follows, viz. that they stood and fell together. The passage may be thus paraphrased. I have proved to you already, he would say, that Melchizedec, Messiah's type, was superior to Abraham, to Aaron, and to Levi, and I would speak to you now concerning Levi's priesthood. You esteem that priesthood perfect, you imagine that the law which established it, and that the legal ordinances which were given to Israel in connection with it, are immutable. But if it were indeed so, if that priesthood with its legal ordinances be really able to wash away sin, to give to the worshipper peace with God, solid assurance of his favour, and the well-grounded hope of eternal life, why did the Holy Ghost whilst that priesthood was in full vigour, and its legal ordinances continued in all their force, speak of another priest arising? That priest also, let me remind you, was to be after the order of Melchizedec, and not after the order of Aaron. The priesthood then was to be changed; and if so, God of necessity contemplated a change also of the law which established it, and an abrogation of those legal ordinances which were connected with it. That he did contemplate such a change is further evident from another circumstance. Messiah, of whom in the Psalm already quoted the Holy Ghost is speaking, pertains, not to

the tribe of Levi but to that of Judah; for both from prophecy and fact "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah." Now the law of Moses says nothing about a priesthood arising out of that tribe; and from the days of Moses until now, no son of Judah has ever given "attendance at the altar." You see then, brethren, St. Paul would say, that the Holy Ghost intimated even as early as the days of David, that the law which you fancy immutable *was to be abrogated*, that the legal ordinances *were to cease*, and that the priesthood which you imagine perfect, *was to be superseded by another*.

It was impossible for the Hebrews to meet this argument. They knew the law of Moses and the history of their nation too well not to perceive its unanswerable character. On the matter of the priesthood, that law was particularly stringent. The sacred text informs us that the censers in which Korah's rebellious company had presumed to burn incense before the Lord, were made by his express command, "broad plates for the covering of the altar, to be a memorial to the children of Israel, that no stranger, who is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense."¹ And as for those who offered it on that occasion, the earth swallowed and the fire devoured them. Another circumstance, in some respects more striking, is mentioned in Scripture-history. Uzziah the king of the seed royal of the house of Judah, presumed to go into the temple of the Lord, "to burn incense upon the altar of incense." Let us listen to the remonstrance of Azariah the high-priest with his sovereign. "It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron...Go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed." And while the king contended the matter with the faithful priest, God himself settled it; the leprosy rose in the monarch's forehead, and he "was a leper unto the day of his death."² The Hebrews were well acquainted with such Scripture-facts as these, and with the truth which they inculcated. They also knew from the testimony of their prophets that Messiah was to spring from Judah; they had seen that testimony accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth, "the

¹ Numbers xvi. 40.² II Chronicles xxvi. 16--21.

son of David;"¹ and they read in the Psalm to which the apostle had referred them, that Messiah was God's chosen High-Priest. They knew that his priesthood belonging, as it was declared to do, to another order, could not possibly co-exist with that of Aaron; they knew also that it could not be the mind of God to displace the better that he might make way for the less. And putting all these considerations together, they were shut up to the conclusion that the priesthood of Aaron, with the law which established it and the legal ordinances which were connected with it, had been designed from the first only for a temporary existence, to make way in the fulness of time, for the perfect priesthood of Jesus which alone was worthy of continuance. And it was just to this conclusion that St. Paul desired to bring them.

But this is only the first proof of the Apostle's position. He reminds the Hebrews in the second place, that while the priesthood of Aaron was thus shewn to be temporary, that of Messiah was expressly declared to be eternal.

And it is yet far more evident, IF after the similitude of Melchizedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. (For the law made nothing perfect,) BUT A BETTER HOPE IS BROUGHT IN, by which we draw nigh unto God.

Let me remark, before paraphrasing these verses, that the whole point of the argument which they contain, rests on the words "for ever." The word "carnal" has also peculiar force. It signifies, as we shall see from St. Paul's own explanation, something which is essentially inferior and lifeless, and is therefore doomed to pass away. And the "carnal commandment" which appointed the priesthood of

¹ Matthew i. 1.

Aaron, is in this way contrasted with the eternal authority which has established the life-giving priesthood of Messiah.

I have already made it evident to you my brethren, says the Apostle, from the words of David, that your priesthood and the law which appointed it are doomed to pass away. And his words contain yet further and more irresistible evidence of this truth, if, as they declare, the new priest who must arise, shall not exercise, like your priests, an inferior and temporary ministry, but shall be charged with a life-giving ministry, and appointed to its exercise for ever. And they declare this expressly: God testifies by David, "thou art a priest for ever." Now if this be true of the priest "after the similitude of Melchizedec,"—if the word of the Everlasting has indeed constituted him priest for ever, what becomes of your priests "after the order of Aaron?" What becomes of the law which has appointed them? Inasmuch as two eternal priesthoods cannot co-exist, that of Aaron must give way. Be not offended that I have called the law which appointed it "a carnal commandment." God himself has pronounced this sentence on it in these words of David, for they virtually disannul it, by appointing another in its room. They disannul it moreover as weak and unprofitable, for that which is perfect abides. But "the law made nothing perfect;" with all its priests and sacrifices it never gave peace with God, and never could. Now however we have in its stead, the perfect and abiding priesthood of Messiah, filling us with a "better hope," and enabling us to "draw nigh unto God."

This argument was evidently designed to force upon the Hebrews the conclusion to which the former might have led them. And they must have felt it, like the former, utterly unanswerable. They could not deny the words of their own inspired seer, that Messiah was a priest for ever; and it was impossible to believe this without acknowledging that the sons of Aaron were priests for a time only. Neither could they deny that the eternal duration of the one priesthood and the temporary character of the other, were as plain intimations as God could give, that the one was perfect and the

other inferior. Unwelcome moreover as these conclusions were, the Hebrews could not be ignorant that they were no new doctrines of St. Paul; they had only to be honest with themselves to find a confirmation of them in every page of their own Scriptures. The very law which they revered, proclaimed its own insufficiency. It appointed no sacrifice for presumptuous sins, or for breaches of the moral code, and did not profess to give peace of conscience or to minister grace whereby God might be served. When the inspired writer of this psalm had himself fallen into the awful sins of murder and adultery, they knew that he had not applied to Zadok and Abiathar that they should present an offering and make intercession with God on his behalf. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it," was his language on that deeply affecting occasion; "thou delightest not in burnt-offering: the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." He sought earnestly for pardon and for grace. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation," was his prayer. And again, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." And again, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me."¹ But he did not seek these blessings through the legal priesthood. Nor did the gracious word "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," come to him through them. It came through the lips of God's prophet,² direct from the invisible throne. It was vouchsafed because of that sacrifice which was yet to be offered, and from respect had to the intercession of him who, in the fulness of time, was to be revealed as the eternal High-Priest of his people. David, therefore, in testifying to the eternal priesthood of Messiah, testified to that to which he owed his own salvation. And his history, with many facts of the same character, being well known to the Hebrews, they could not but feel that the apostle's present teaching was only a fuller explanation of Moses

¹ Psalm li. 1, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17.

² II Sam. xii. 13.

and the prophets. And they could not be convinced of this without thankfulness to God, that what had been declared and also proved insufficient, had now passed away, to make room for that which was able to save to the uttermost.

But St. Paul had yet another proof of his position to press on the attention of the Hebrews. The sons of Aaron were consecrated without an oath, but Messiah was *sworn into office*.

And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath, by him that said to him, The Lord swear and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec:) by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better COVENANT.

These words require no paraphrase; their meaning is obvious. Swearing on the part of God to any thing, is the strongest proof of its value and unchangeableness which even he can give. He swears in another Psalm, that Christ's throne shall endure for ever;¹ and in the words just quoted he swears to the perpetuity of his priesthood, adding, to give emphasis to his oath, the assurance that he "will not repent." It is no ordinary dignity then which belongs to our royal High-Priest; nor are those ordinary interests which depend on the continuance of his honours. The text tells us in part what these interests are; St. Paul argues from the fact of his being thus sworn into office, that he is "a surety of a better covenant." The inferior covenant was that which guaranteed to Israel the possession of the land of Canaan. The condition of that covenant was Israel's obedience to God. And the priests of the house of Aaron were in one sense its sureties; they were appointed to instruct Israel in God's law, and their ministry of mediation was a continual pledge of his love. But these sureties were made "without an oath;" for they were sinful men, and God

¹ Psalm lxxxix. 3, 4, 35, 36.

could not depend on them. And they proved his judgment to be just, for they led Israel away from him instead of teaching them his law. The covenant was thus broken which gave Israel a right to Canaan; ten of the twelve tribes long before this epistle was written, had been driven from that good land, whilst those who remained were languishing under a haughty oppressor's yoke. The promise of the kingdom of glory to those who believe in God, is the subject of the "better covenant." Jesus is the "surety" of this covenant, for his obedience unto death is its fulfilled condition. The sins and shortcomings of his people cannot exclude them from this inheritance, for he has been exalted as their High-Priest, and presents on their behalf for ever his blood of unfailing efficacy. He is also surety to the Father for them, that they shall be found meet to inherit. There were many men of God among the legal high-priests, but they were not able, with all their instructions and admonitions, to make froward Israel obedient to him. It is otherwise with our High-Priest above. There is in him a fulness of all grace to subdue the frowardness of his people; he works in them now both to will and to do of God's good pleasure; he shall present them at last and preserve them for ever, "unblameable and unproveable."¹ He is a High-Priest therefore of whose appointment God never will repent. Eternity itself shall discover no flaw in the perfection of his obedience, nor shall there be anything in the condition of those whom he has introduced into the inheritance of glory to make God desire their exclusion. And besides the greater security which thus belongs to it, the new covenant is better in itself. The office of instructing Israel and mediating with God on their behalf, to which the sureties of the old covenant were appointed, guaranteed after all only the possession of an earthly inheritance; and for this reason also they were made "without an oath." It is altogether different with our Lord Jesus. On the exercise of his priestly ministry the everlasting glory of the Father in his people and their everlasting blessedness at once depend. He is there-

¹ Phil. ii. 13.² Coloss. i. 22.

fore made priest by the oath of the Everlasting, in token both of the safety and the preciousness of the interests committed to his care.

Jealous as the Hebrews were for the covenant of God with their father Abraham, which guaranteed to their nation the possession of the land of Canaan, they could not but acknowledge the validity of this argument. For they had seen that covenant made void before their eyes. And the slightest retrospect of the history and character of its sureties, their priests of the house of Aaron, was more than sufficient to prove that God had abundant cause to repent having ever appointed them to office. St. Paul therefore sought to lead them from the earthly to the heavenly; from sinful, erring priests, with whom God's Spirit was vexed and disappointed, to his immaculate Son, in whom he rests with eternal complacency; from the fields and vineyards of the earthly Canaan, out of which their nation had been cast, to that blessed land of promise, that land of Immanuel, out of which no adversary should cast them out for ever. Jehovah's oath declared in what he rested; and the apostle would lead them away from what had no such guarantee, and bring them to be of one mind with their God.

In reviewing this threefold argument, it is impossible not to remark that "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," as wielded by the hand of this skilful master in Israel, is made to cut two ways. The words of David declare that a priest of another order must arise; and the apostle proves from them, *not this only*, but the abrogation of the law which established the order of Aaron. These words declare that this new priesthood is eternal; and the apostle proves from them, *not this only*, but that the priesthood of Aaron was temporary. They declare finally that this priesthood is established by an oath; and the apostle demonstrates from this, not merely the excellence of the covenant which it secures, but the inferior character of that which preceded. What a lesson this teaches of the value of holy Scripture! Who could have imagined that three words in the mouth of

David could have contained such a fulness of gospel-truth, truth fitted at once for the conviction of the Jew and the instruction and consolation of the believing Gentile !

To shew the truth of this last remark, let me draw some practical lessons from the subject which we have just been considering. The first part of St. Paul's argument goes to prove that perfection was not "by the Levitical priesthood, in connection with which" Israel "received the law." We gather certainly from this statement that perfection is by the priesthood of Christ, in connection with which we receive the blessed gospel. It is perfection "as pertaining to the conscience," which St. Paul here means. That expression signifies peace of conscience, liberty of access to God, and holy ability to serve him. These blessings therefore, according to the text, come to us by the priesthood of Christ. There is very great instruction in this apparently simple truth. There are many who tell us that they are unfeignedly trusting in Christ, but that they have no peace of conscience, no assurance of Divine mercy : this privilege, they add, is the attainment of a favoured few. Others profess to have attained it ; but if we inquire from what it is derived, one speaks of his comfortable feelings ; another, of some cheering text of Scripture borne home on his mind ; and a third, of the work of God's Spirit consciously proceeding in his heart. But all this is utterly wrong. To speak of trusting in Christ unfeignedly, and yet having no peace with God, is to say that his priesthood *has not brought in the perfection*. To say that assurance of God's mercy is the attainment of a few only, and that it is quite possible to serve him without it, is to alter the whole character of Christian obedience ; for the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba Father, is its root and spring. And it is equally wrong to look to the things now referred to as the ground of this most needful blessing. We ought to look *only* to the priesthood of Christ. The devout worshippers on the annual day of atonement, saw the legal high-priest slay the sacrifice and carry its blood within the vail : and if that sacrifice had been availing, and that intercession prevalent,

what they were thus privileged to see would have given them peace with God. Now the sacrifice of Christ is availing, and his intercession is prevalent. And the blessed gospel declares that this sacrifice has been slain, and that its blood is now presented for us. To believe in the Lord Jesus is to put our trust in this gracious declaration. And what more do we need to assure us of the forgiveness of sin? What more do we need to give us peace with God? We need nothing more: to look to anything else will only mislead us; but if we enter eternity trusting in this word of God, we shall never be put to shame. And ability to serve him whom we thus know as a Father, comes from the same Saviour from whom peace of conscience comes. He ministers the Holy Ghost to those who unfeignedly trust in him for pardon, and in the power of the grace thus ministered they serve and glorify God. Every true believer can therefore say with the evangelical prophet, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."¹

If the first part of St. Paul's argument is thus full of instruction, the second which proves the eternal duration of Christ's priesthood, is full of unspeakable consolation. We are told that by this priesthood "a better hope is brought in, by which we draw nigh unto God." This blessed access to the Father through Jesus Christ, is conscious "life and peace." But who shall assure us that this is "an endless life," that the mercy in which we trust shall endure for ever, that the aspect of Deity shall never be changed towards us? We are sinners against God, and have come short of his glory; and our only present security from wrath, is that the blood of our sacrifice is presented in the holiest of all. The same intercession then, the same advocacy, if continued for ever, is our eternal security. And so the text, by declaring Christ's priesthood to be eternal, ministers the comfort and the assurance which we need. Without such a blessed assurance, the prospect of eternal existence would be a prospect full of terror. For peradventure, through the long roll of everlasting ages, some new purpose of God might be revealed, some new manifestation of his character, some new dispensation

¹ Isaiah xlv. 24

towards the creatures of his hands ; peradventure something might be evolved to bring up the remembrance of our offences ; some of these changes might alter our relation to God, and we might find ourselves cast out of his sight. But in the eternal priesthood of our Saviour we are secured against this danger. Dispensation may indeed succeed dispensation, and change follow change, as the Infinite goes on to reveal himself throughout the boundless ages to come ; but no change can alter our relation to him, or turn away his favour from us ; for he who bore our sins in his own body, and has carried his blood of memorial within the vail, *abides for ever in the bosom of invisible Deity*. If he could die, if he could cease to appear as our advocate, our hopes would die with him. But his existence and advocacy are alike eternal, and we have therefore in him "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace."¹ It will not do to say that the loving and merciful character of God is in itself a sufficient ground of confidence. We know nothing of God except in Christ. The incarnation reveals his love, the cross reveals his mercy ; the eternal priesthood assures us of the unchangeable character of both. Take that cross and priesthood away, and our confidence is necessarily gone ; the Divine character ceases to be light,² nay, becomes thick darkness. But while this is true on the one hand, let us take heed on the other, of the opposite mistake. Many speak as if Christ had procured God's love, and as if he were now extorting mercy for us from an unwilling Deity. This is a most serious error ; it is ignorance at once of the Saviour and of him from whom the Saviour came forth. It makes the Son *take glory from the Father* by being more gracious than he, instead of *giving glory to the Father*,³ by revealing his eternal name. We have repeatedly learned from Scripture, that the love and mercy of God are uncaused by anything in us. Let us now understand that even Christ himself has not caused them. The incarnation, the cross, the priesthood, *have not taught the Eternal to be gracious* ; they have only revealed him who from everlasting to everlasting is the same. Jesus would

¹ II Thess. ii. 16.² I John i. 5.³ John xvii. 4.

teach us a lesson by them, and that lesson is, "the Father himself loveth you."¹ For he came out of that bosom in which he had lain from everlasting, and having died for our sins, returned into it again as our advocate, that we might have confidence to follow, and to make it our eternal home.

And we must not forget the third part of St. Paul's argument. It also is full of consolation, for it presents Christ to us as the "surety of a better covenant." God has promised an eternal inheritance of glory to those who believe in his name. Do we inquire into the conditions of this promise? Its conditions, we are informed, have been fulfilled already, in the obedience of Christ unto death. Do we inquire with anxiety, whether our sins shall not hinder its fulfilment? Our attention is directed to Calvary, and we are told that in the sacrifice offered there and now presented above, these sins are put away. Are we afraid that the great God will forget a promise made to such worthless worms as we are? We are told that he who died for us, appears in his presence on our behalf, putting him in mind of us and watching over our interests continually. Finally, are we afraid that our presence shall dishonour heaven, and do we inquire how we are to be made meet for that place of purest holiness? We are told that the same Saviour in whose blood, righteousness, and intercession, our title to this inheritance stands and is secured, has become surety to the Father that we shall be found meet to inherit. For, as we have seen already, he is now with God as our forerunner, i. e. as the pledge that we shall surely follow. Moreover Christ is responsible eternally for those whom he introduces into the inheritance of glory. They are brought in through his sacrifice and intercession; and if it could ever be that they dishonoured the holy presence of God, the Father would repent that he had made him High-Priest. But the text declares that God never will repent of having done so. And we have therefore the blessed assurance that when we "eat and drink" at God's table, in his kingdom,² we shall be found meet and worthy guests, and that no cloud shall to all eternity cross his countenance of

¹ John xvi. 27.² Luke xxii. 30.

love, to tell us that we are unwelcome there. It is impossible to express the consolation with which these precious truths are filled. They afford every security which faith can desire, that if we confide unfeignedly in Christ our Saviour, we shall be at last presented "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."¹

How full then is this precious subject of the glory of Christ! Let us sum up its lessons in one word. We feel our need of peace of conscience and holy ability to serve God. It directs us to him as our perfect High-Priest. We look beyond this world into eternity, and ask an assurance that God's mercy shall endure for ever. It directs us to the same Saviour as our eternal High-Priest. We ask a pledge that the heavenly inheritance shall be ours, and that we shall be made meet for its glories. And we are directed by this subject to him through whose intercession we shall be introduced into this inheritance, whom Jehovah has made High-Priest with an oath; and of whose appointment he never will repent. None of these things were found in Aaron. St. Paul then has succeeded in his argument; he has demonstrated the immeasurable superiority of the Priest after the order of Melchizedec. May it be given to us to know this High-Priest's grace, and to trust unfeignedly in his eternal mercy! We shall thus be privileged to serve God now and to abide in his presence for ever.

¹ Jude 24.

LECTURE X.

Hebrews vii. 23—28.

“ And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.”

THE Apostle, as we have just seen, having demonstrated the superiority of the priesthood of Christ to that of Aaron, in its *perfection*, its *eternity*, and its *sacredness*, proceeds in the first part of the Scripture which we have now read, to shew to the Hebrews that we sinners derive from such a priesthood an advantage of the most important kind. Having thus exhausted the subject of Christ's CALL, he returns to that of his QUALIFICATIONS, shewing in the latter part of this Scripture, that the Priest after the order of Melchizedec, is as truly exalted above the sons of Aaron in spiritual character as in the dignity and efficacy of his sacred office. Let us consider this two-fold argument, with the attention and care which it deserves.

And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this ONE, because he continueth ever, HATH A PRIESTHOOD WHICH PASSETH NOT FROM HAND TO HAND. Wherefore he is able also to save them WITHOUT END that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an High Priest became us.

The Jewish high-priests were many, because death cut short their dignity. No fewer than three and twenty persons executed that holy office, from the days of Aaron to the captivity.¹ But he of whom I am now speaking, says St. Paul, is in this respect my brethren, utterly unlike our priesthood. Inasmuch as "He continueth ever," his office passes not from hand to hand, but always remains with himself. And he is able on this account, to save to the end of time, as long as sinners shall be found on the earth to need salvation, "them that come unto God by him;" he lives from generation to generation, to present their cause to God; yea, he lives for evermore to do so. When we therefore have come to him with the burden of our guilt, when we have made known to him our spiritual necessities, when we have sought his mediation, our souls are safe for ever. There is no fear of a stranger succeeding our friend in office. And he is the faithful friend of those who trust in him; he will never forget the cause which has been committed to his care. God in his infinite mercy, has provided for us such an High-Priest; "for such an High-priest" alone suits the necessities of the guilty.

The mere statement of this argument is sufficient to prove its force. But I apprehend that St. Paul had yet another purpose in bringing it forward than that which we have now considered. He had shewed to the Hebrews that the priesthood of Melchizedec had neither beginning nor end of priestly days, and that in this respect it typified the priesthood of Messiah. Whereas their priests, as he had pointed out to them, coming into office at thirty years of age and

¹ I Chronicles vi. 3—15.

going out of it at fifty years, belonged evidently to another order. But they might have objected that this was true of their inferior priests only: our high-priest, they might have said, once inaugurated, continues in office while he lives, and in this respect is equal to Melchizedec. It may be so, my brethren, answers the Apostle; but Melchizedec holding office while he lived, was a type of Messiah holding office while he lives. And though your high-priest may be in one respect equal to the man Melchizedec, he still falls infinitely short of Melchizedec's antitype. For death comes in to deprive him of his dignities, but Messiah lives for evermore. I believe that without this the argument of the Apostle is imperfect. His object is to prove that Christ is superior to the whole Jewish priesthood. He has proved before, his superiority to the ordinary priests, inasmuch as the office which has been committed to him, is not limited to any term of years; and he now proves his superiority to the high-priest, inasmuch as death itself cannot cut short his official dignity.

Having thus sketched the argument of these verses as it applied to Hebrews, let us consider what we Christians may learn from it. It demonstrates in the clearest manner that there is now no *ministerial* priesthood. The two dispensations, the Mosaic and the Christian, are here contrasted. The one is said to have possessed its many priests, not suffered to continue by reason of death, and its transferable priesthood. The other is distinguished by its one Priest, who continueth ever, and its untransferable priesthood. Now if the bishops and presbyters of Christ's church be really priests, this argument is not true, nay, it is the reverse of the truth. It is mere evasion to say that they are only his delegates and representatives, and that the priesthood remains inalienably his. If this name imports that they are *really* priests, if moreover they transmit this priestly character by the rite of ordination to those who come after them, the Christian dispensation, I repeat, is distinguished by its many priests, not suffered to continue by reason of death, and its transferable priesthood. The argument of the text

is thus so completely stultified that it is inconceivable, with Hebrew cavillers watching his every word, that the Apostle should have ventured to make use of it. They might have pointed to Timothy and Titus, and many more besides, on whom St. Paul himself had laid hands. They might have put the unanswerable question, Are not these many priests? shall not their priesthood be cut short by death? shall it not pass from hand to hand? Where then is the contrast, they might have said, which you dishonestly attempt to draw between your Christian system and the heaven-ordained customs of our fathers?

But does not this argument destroy the priesthood of the saints? By no means. The saints are not priests by delegation now, nor shall they be hereafter. Jesus and his people are ONE in the sight of God, and whatever is his, is therefore theirs also. They are sons in his sonship, kings in his royal dignity, and priests in his priesthood. And as their sonship and kingdom are eternal, so is their priesthood; it continues with them for ever; it passes not from hand to hand.

The priesthood thus established is another irrefragable argument against ministerial priesthood. There cannot be two priesthoods. A king over kings, a bishop over bishops, a priest over priests, is an absurdity. What distinguished the Aaronic priest from those to whom he ministered, was the privilege of drawing near to God and presenting the blood of the sacrifice. He might do both, the common Israelite might do neither. If God's ministers are priests, this is still their distinctive privilege. They alone may draw nigh to God, they alone may present to him in faith that sacrifice of his Son, without which no prayer is acceptable. But God forbid that we should say so! It were denying the Lord that bought us; these precious privileges belong to all God's people. They are therefore all priests, and there can be only ONE PRIESTHOOD.

There are also other lessons to be learned from this Scripture. In telling us that Christ is able to save them that come unto God by him, the Apostle teaches us dis-

tinctly that man in himself is lost. In his original condition of innocence, man had the privilege of access to God. That privilege however was forfeited when our father Adam sinned; his offended Maker, we are told, “drove out the man,”¹ not that man only, but all generations of his children. But while man is thus lost in himself, there is hope for him in Christ; the language of the text implies that we may come unto God by him. He has died for our sins, he has also passed into the holiest and makes intercession on our behalf. And God, having accepted his sacrifice, and listening to his intercession, has reversed for his sake the sentence of exclusion, and sends abroad instead of it, the word of invitation and welcome, “I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you.”² And while Christ is thus the way to God, we are warned in the text that he is the only way. For the ability to save which it declares to belong to him, comprehends those only who come to God by him: he is not able to save others. Nor will God save them. Coming to him in their own name, they shall be eternally rejected. All this is declared most emphatically by Jesus himself. When his disciples asked him the way to the Father, he answered, “I am the way...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”³

But while the text thus declares our lost condition in ourselves, and our lost condition without Christ, it declares with equal distinctness, our certain salvation, if we come to God by him. We know from the cross, that he is willing to save us; and if he is also able, nothing can hinder our salvation. What then is it, “to come unto God by him?” It is to come acknowledging that as the children of a sinning father, and as sinners in our own persons, we have justly forfeited God’s favour and exposed ourselves to his eternal wrath. It is to confess heartily that between us and eternal misery there is nothing but the blood of Christ; it is to accept thankfully the forgiveness which that precious blood has procured. To come to God, implies, moreover, that we desire to serve him. But the devil, with his “crafts

¹ Genesis iii. 24.² II Corinthians vi. 17, 18.³ John xiv. 6.

and assaults," the world with its temptations, and the sin which is in our hearts, all withstand us in doing so. And to come by Christ is a hearty and unfeigned reliance on the grace of his Spirit alone, for victory over these enemies of our souls. Self-renunciation therefore is the very essence of this coming. But those who thus renounce themselves and trust in Christ, shall, as has just been stated, find Christ a Saviour. He shall save them from wrath. "Behold...a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest."¹ And the Apostle tells us that this man is the Son of God "whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come."² He shall save them from the devil. "Simon, Simon," said the Lord, "behold, Satan hath desired to have you,...but I have prayed for thee."³ He shall save them from the seducing and corrupting influence of the world. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world," is his recorded intercession, "but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."⁴ Finally, he shall save them from the sin which is in their own hearts. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," was the commandment of the angel, "for he shall save his people from their sins."⁵ Such is the blessedness both here and hereafter of as many as "come unto God by him." Accepted in the beloved, and strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, they serve God now, and shall abide in his presence for ever as the dear children of his love.

The text declares besides how it is that Christ saves his people; he makes intercession for them, *i.e.* presents their cause to God. As St. John also declares, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."⁶ Very unworthy ideas are entertained on the subject of this advocacy. Many persons speak as if God accepted the guilty because Christ asks it, and God cannot refuse his Son. This is indeed true in one sense, but it

¹ Isaiah xxxii. 1, 2.

² Luke xxii. 31, 32.

³ 1 Thess. i. 10. Tyndale, Cranmer, Geneva.

⁴ John xvii. 15.

⁵ Matthew i. 21.

⁶ 1 John ii. 1.

ought never to be forgotten that there is no favouritism in the dealings of God. The pleader in the court above is "Jesus Christ the righteous," and what he asks is that righteousness may be done. It is a righteous thing with God then, to save Christ's people for his sake. Let us consider this important truth in two distinct aspects. The real, spiritual oneness of Christ and his people, lies at the bottom of the whole doctrine of salvation. Every similitude which nature and the ordinances of society furnish, has been exhausted by holy Scripture to set this oneness forth. We read in one place, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me."¹ We read in another of being "joined unto the Lord," as the wife is joined to her husband.² And in another still we read that "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."³ This blessed oneness is through faith and by the Holy Ghost, and in virtue of it Christ the true Aaron has the names of God's Israel on his breastplate, *i.e.* he appears on high, representing in his person the whole company of those that trust in him. The Father sees them as contained in him, and deals with them accordingly. The blood of his sacrifice is their atonement, and obtains their pardon: his obedience to the law is their obedience, and obtains their everlasting acceptance. Even human laws recognize the righteousness of such procedure. In very many instances they punish or reward the children in the father, the wife in the husband. And in every instance when they acquit a man of crime, they acquit the members of his body; when they exalt a man to honour, they ennoble his members along with him. The hands and feet of a malefactor partake of his dishonour, but men kiss the hand of a king. Let us look at Christ's advocacy in another aspect. God has proclaimed his acceptance of the sacrifice of his Son, and has commanded all the ends of the earth to look to him on the ground of it, and be saved.⁴ And when we come to God in terms of this invitation, the Divine faithfulness is engaged on our behalf, for Jesus has

¹ Heb. ii. 13.² I Corinthians vi. 16, 17.³ Ephesians v. 30.⁴ Isaiah xlv. 22.

a plea to present for us, which that faithfulness cannot disown. We come expecting pardon on the ground of that sacrifice. And Jesus says for us to the Father, they have thy warrant for expecting it. We come seeking protection from the devil; and Jesus puts the Father in remembrance, thy faithfulness is engaged to grant it. We come seeking grace from above, that we may triumph over the world and the flesh; and again Jesus says on our behalf, Thy word of truth is passed, that they shall not be sent empty away. Our advocate is therefore well called "Jesus Christ the righteous;" for the burden of his pleading may be expressed in the inspired words of his servant, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"¹ The salvation of sinners then, it may be said, is a matter not of mercy but of righteousness. Both mercy and righteousness appear in it. In the depth of the riches of the wisdom and love of God, his mercy and his truth have met together; his righteousness and our peace have also kissed each other.* Mercy provided the Saviour; mercy gave the promise of life; mercy leads us to the Saviour and to God by him. But when we have been so led, it is righteousness, eternal righteousness, which secures our everlasting peace.

We learn finally, from this portion of the text, that because Christ ever liveth thus to intercede for his people, he is able to save them "without end." It is eighteen hundred years since St. Paul and his brethren found him so; and the lapse of ages which changes every human ordinance, alters not a whit the salvation of God; "Jesus, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,"² still remains the only way to the Father. How precious is this thought! It is our privilege to trust in him in whom all the saved ones of God in every age have trusted, in whom our fathers and our fathers' fathers have hoped, in whom our children and our children's children shall place their confidence till the generations of the earth shall have an end. And the words "ever liveth...to save without end," carry our thoughts and hopes far beyond time into the illimitable

¹ Genesis xviii. 25.² Psalm lxxxv. 10.³ Heb. xlii. 8.

ages that shall follow it. We shall ever be beheld by the Father as those who are in the Son, pardoned through his sacrifice, accepted and adopted through his righteousness and intercession. We shall also, as a part of this endless salvation, be filled with the Spirit of Christ crying in us eternally Abba Father. His ever living is thus the pledge and security, as we saw in the last lecture, of our eternal life. To this consoling truth we have the seal of his own most gracious declaration, "Because I live, ye shall live also."¹

St. Paul would shew to the Hebrews, in the second part of the text, the excellent QUALIFICATIONS of this ever-living High-Priest

For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, SEPARATED from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is PERFECTED for evermore.

These words are contrast, not comparison. St. Paul has already compared Christ with the Jewish high-priests: the point of comparison was that both He and they were "compassed with infirmity." He now contrasts Him with these functionaries, and the contrast is that while they have infirmity, He is without it, being "perfected for evermore." The most superficial thinker must perceive the reason of this apparent discrepancy. The Apostle in the former Scripture, is speaking of Christ in mortal flesh; here he is speaking of Him in immortal glory. Christ in mortal flesh, was compassed with infirmity; Christ in immortal glory has left it for ever behind Him. It is not because He is now conscious of them, but because He remembers Gethsemane and Calvary, that He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Among the varied beauties of this epistle, this comparison

¹ John xiv. 19.

and contrast is not the least. And the apprehension of it on our part is absolutely necessary, if we would understand the Apostle's argument. Our Lord was the predestinated High-Priest during His sojourn on earth, and as such, interceded for His people. But He was not the perfected High-Priest, nor did He enter on the full discharge of the functions of His everlasting ministry, till He was raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God.

I have inserted again the words "for such an High-Priest became us," because, standing as they do in the very middle of the text, they apply, as is usual in the impassioned style of St. Paul, at once to what has preceded and to that which follows them. I have also substituted *separated* for *separate*, for besides being more faithful to the original, this change is absolutely necessary, as we shall see, to the elucidation of the Apostle's meaning.

The qualifications of a Priest were two-fold, and the subject of Christ's qualifications for that holy office, is not now introduced for the first time. St. Paul, as we have seen, had already shewed to the Hebrews, that their great High-Priest had passed through his people's circumstances, and that he had been found in these circumstances, "without sin." The first of these qualifications was necessary, that he might sympathize with his people, in their trials; the second was necessary, that he might appear before God, on their behalf. In his former reasoning on the subject the Apostle dwelt chiefly on the first qualification of our exalted High-Priest; in the words before us he dwells chiefly on the second. I shall briefly sketch his argument in its application to the Hebrews, and then examine it minutely for our own instruction and comfort.

The Hebrews were well aware that holiness was an essential requisite of the priesthood. According to the ordinance of God by Moses, a golden plate, with "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" engraven on it, was to be "ALWAYS" on the high-priest's forehead, that he might be accepted in his ministrations for the people.¹ And Aaron was therefore called

¹ Exodus xxviii. 36—38.

"the saint" or holy one "of the Lord."¹ But he of whom I now speak, my brethren, says St. Paul, is in reality what most of our high-priests are in type and name only; he is indeed "holy." His devotedness to God and tender love to man were put to the severest trials, but out of these trials he came "undefiled:" they only proved the reality of his holiness, the depth and tenderness of his love. He is therefore "such an High-Priest" as "became us," for his unsullied purity entitles him to minister in the holiest, on our behalf. God himself, adds the apostle, has borne testimony to this. For while our priests minister among sinners, and in an earthly temple built by the hands of sinners, he of whom I speak, has been "separated from sinners" by the act of God's glorious power manifested in his resurrection and ascension, "and made higher than the heavens." And his ministrations in the temple above, i.e. in the immediate presence of the Father, are of a kind which sufficiently marks how highly in moral and spiritual character he is exalted above the sons of Aaron. For they offer sacrifices, first for their own sins and then for the people's, and repeat these sacrifices daily because they are inefficacious. But he, having no sins of his own, offered up once for all on his people's behalf, the efficacious sacrifice of himself, and has carried its precious memorial into the heaven of heavens. Let us hear then, my brethren, the conclusion of the whole matter. The law of which you boast so highly, maketh creatures, yea sinful, dying creatures, high-priests; but the word of the oath which succeeded the law, has committed the perfect priesthood into the hands of the immaculate and exalted Son of God, and in his hands it shall abide, untransferable, eternally.

Let us now consider for ourselves these qualifications of our exalted High-Priest. He is "holy," perfectly holy; he is also harmless. Perfect holiness is perfect purity of heart, perfect love to God and man. As it regards God, this love shews itself in perfect devotedness to his glory, in unceasing and delighted obedience to his will; His

¹ Psalm cvi. 16.

service is "perfect freedom," yea, it is "glorious liberty." As it regards man, it shews itself in harmlessness. Love to others makes us unwilling to hurt them, teaches us to shrink from giving pain, and unless we are compelled by necessity, never allows us to be severe. I need not remark that our blessed Saviour exhibited this holiness and harmlessness both in his life and death. He was also tried to the uttermost, that the genuine character of these gracious qualities might appear. His love to the Father was tried: poverty, suffering, and rejection were appointed as his earthly lot; and a life of almost unmingled sorrow was to have its end in a death of shame. But it stood the trial: "he humbled himself and was obedient."¹ It was tried yet more severely, when the Father forsook him in the hour of his direst extremity. But it stood this trial also; the Son loved and trusted in him even through the darkness, calling to him, "*my God, my God.*"² at the very moment when he complained of his desertion. And his love to man was tried; man repaid him for his kindness with hatred, contempt, and scorn, and in the bitterness of that hatred became at last his murderer. But he loved man through it all with an affection strong as death; he gave his life for man's salvation, though man was the shedder of his blood. The holy and harmless one of God thus came out of trial "undefiled;" no stain dishonoured his obedience, no imperfection was discovered in his love. And what greatly enhances the value of this demonstration of Christ's character is the voluntary nature of his obedience, and the power which was committed to his hands. He was not compelled to a life and death of shame; he embraced it of his own will. It was this which marked his obedience as the fruit of love, and made it so precious in the Father's sight. "No man taketh my life from me," are his own words, "but I lay it down of myself," and "therefore doth my Father love me."³ For love is repaid with love, and filial affection was in this case repaid with paternal. We have a kindred proof of his genuine love to man; the mighty power which was entrusted to Jesus was never used

¹ Philipp. ii. 8.² Psalm xxii. 1.³ John x. 17, 18.

for harm! We are told by one who was never absent from his side, that "when he suffered, he threatened not."¹ One word from him would have brought down fire from heaven on the churlish Samaritan village, and his disciples petitioned for such a word. But "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," was his reply; "the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives."² When his enemies came to take him in the garden, the majesty of his awful presence constrained them to fall to the ground;³ and one of the disciples, thinking to please his Master, "smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear." But "Suffer ye thus far," was the answer of that harmless one, "and he touched his ear, and healed him."⁴ Thus our blessed Saviour lived, and thus he died. The Father looked upon him as he lay dead in Joseph's sepulchre, and remembered on his behalf the promise on which he had caused him to hope. He did not suffer his Holy One to see corruption, but shewed to him, through resurrection, the path of life, "separated" him "from sinners," "and made" him "higher than the heavens." "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?"—is the question of the inspired Psalmist. "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.... he shall receive the blessing from the Lord," is the answer of Jehovah's oracle.⁵ And in conformity with this, our Lord declares, "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."⁶ He himself has had the first experience of this blessedness. For he has been exalted far above these visible heavens into that truly holy place, that place of light inaccessible in which the eternal Father dwells; and there, relieved from the hated presence of sin and from all possible approach of sinners, our holy, harmless and undefiled High-Priest exercises his perfect and eternal ministry. He appears there before the Father, at once the High-Priest and the sacrifice of his people, their intercessor and propitiation; and the burden of his eternal prayer is that for his sake who died for them, they may be pardoned and accepted and blessed. For

¹ I Peter ii. 23.² Luke ix. 54—56.³ John xviii. 6.⁴ Luke xxii. 50, 51.⁵ Psalm xxiv. 3—5.⁶ Matt. v. 8.

"we have an advocate with the Father, and he is the propitiation for our sins."¹

These precious truths are full of unspeakable consolation. We cannot ascend up to heaven to present our own prayers to God, or to watch in person over our eternal interests. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man."² But blessed be his name, he hath ascended, and is there on our behalf. We need not be afraid therefore; God is not too high above us for our prayers to reach his ear. As long as the Son of man is "higher than the heavens," nothing shall obstruct the prayers of the sons of men in their passage to his exalted mercy-seat. And we may safely trust the interests of our salvation to him to whom God has entrusted the interest of his glory. The Father is glorified in the salvation of as many as come to him in his risen Son. And if it were possible that we could lose our souls in doing so, his name would be dishonoured in our perdition. But the perfect holiness of our High-Priest, his perfect love to the Father and to us, is the sure guarantee that this is for ever impossible. And in the Holy One of God there is no deceit or guile; "we beheld his glory," says St. John, "full of grace and truth."³ He hath said, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;"⁴ "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish;"⁵ "he that believeth on me hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."⁶ And the unsullied purity of him who has made these promises, is the eternal pledge of their accomplishment. He is "harmless" too as well as holy. He will not seek occasion against us, that he may reject us from his mercy and visit us with his wrath. His harmless love "is not easily provoked," "it beareth all things" and thinketh no evil."⁷ All the "contradiction of sinners" which he encountered in the days of his flesh, all the backwardness and stupidity of his disciples, failed to ruffle the serenity of his bosom, to abate his untiring and patient affection. And he is as forbearing

¹ I John ii. 1, 2.

² John iii. 13.

³ John i. 14.

⁴ John vi. 37.

⁵ John x. 27, 28.

⁶ John vi. 40, 47.

⁷ I Corin. xiii. 5, 7.

with his enemies and as patient with his people now. The singleness of his offering in the heaven of heavens, proclaims all this, proclaims him thus sinless and immaculate. He is therefore the worthy object of the sinner's confidence and hope; and we cannot apprehend his glorious character, without being constrained to say with the Apostle in the text, "such an High-Priest became us."

All this teaches another and a very solemn lesson. We have learned from former parts of this epistle, what is also taught in the text, viz. that the sons of men may expect under trial and temptation the sympathy of this Son of man. But let us remember his character; he is the holy and undefiled one. We may not expect this sympathy then, when we are excusing our wickedness by calling it our infirmity, when we are encouraging ourselves in some evil passion, and seeking to gratify some darling lust. Jesus gave himself a sacrifice for our sins, and intercedes for us on high, and has promised to us in our distresses his gracious sympathy and help, for the very end of redeeming us from all iniquity, and purifying us as a peculiar people to himself. And woe, woe be to those who turn this grace into wantonness, and seek to make the Father's undefiled One the minister of sin! If we are using God's mercy aright, it will bind us more and more closely, in proportion as we apprehend its greatness, to him and to his blessed service. If this is not the hallowed fruit of our knowledge of God's love, we are abusing it to our destruction.

We learn finally from this whole subject, and especially from the last verse of the text in which St. Paul sums up his argument, how much more gracious God has been to us than he was to his people of the former dispensation. They were under a law which appointed men, sinful, mortal, dying men to the office of the priesthood. This priesthood was necessarily inefficacious and imperfect; the sacrifices of the sinful could not possibly pacify the conscience, the ministrations of the sinful could not cleanse the heart. But the word of the oath which has succeeded the law, and under which we are, has appointed as our High-Priest the immacu-

late Son of God. His priesthood at once pacifies the conscience and cleanses the heart of the believer; it also endures for ever. Let us come then unto God by him; let us come with the burden of our guilt, and with our spiritual wants and necessities. In him we shall find forgiveness and peace, grace also which is sufficient for us, and strength which is made perfect in weakness. The faithfulness of the Holy One will never deceive, the love of the Harmless One will never become impatient with us. He who was himself undefiled, will lead us by his Spirit in the pure and holy ways of God; and separating us now in heart and affection from a world that lieth in wickedness, he shall separate us at last from sinners as he himself was separated, and exalt us as he himself has been exalted. For "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."¹ And this glory is not transient; its guarantee is the word and oath of God, the same word and oath of the same God and Father which has confirmed the honours of his eternal Son. May he then of his infinite mercy incline our hearts to such a choice!

¹ Coloss. iii. 4.

LECTURE XI.

Hebrews viii. 1—6.

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum : We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens ; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices : wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law : who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle : for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."

St. Paul has now arrived in the natural progress of his discourse, at the third subject of consideration proposed by him in the fifth chapter, viz. THE FUNCTIONS of Christ in glory. We have already repeatedly referred to them, but in this we have anticipated the apostle, for except the incidental allusions which we considered in the last lecture, and which were necessarily introduced to set forth the qualifications of our High-Priest and the certain salvation of his believing people, the subject of his priestly functions has as yet been left untouched. But St. Paul never loses sight for an instant, in this or in any of his epistles, of the scope and purpose of his argument ; he therefore now takes up these functions as a separate subject. His words will be found to

confirm every thing which on this head of doctrine has been already taught: they are also a fuller discovery of the wonders of the invisible world.

Now of the things OF WHICH WE ARE SPEAKING, THIS IS THE CROWNING POINT.

The apostle, in the verses which we are now to consider, is not recapitulating former arguments, but introducing a new subject. And this subject is indeed the "crowning point" of the topics of his discourse. A priest called of God and qualified to minister is a blessing, but his ministration is that on which our salvation depends. Professor Stewart therefore renders the words before us, "among the subjects now discussed, this is the principal:" while Tyndall and Cranmer render them with singular felicity of expression "of the things which we have spoken, this is *the pith*."

What then is this crowning point, this principal thing, the pith, the marrow of the whole doctrine of salvation? Messiah's seat in glory, answers the Apostle, and His ministration on our behalf, before God. Let us take these in order.

We have such a High-Priest, who is SEATED on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

These words are the glorious opening of the Apostle's glorious subject, being designed to put the Hebrews in remembrance of the excellent dignity of the true Melchizedec of whose functions he is about to speak. It is no easy matter to expound them; the thoughts which they suggest are too vast for human utterance, I had almost said, for human comprehension. They ascribe to Jesus EQUALITY WITH JEHOVAH combined with PRIESTLY MINISTRATION before him. The ministration comes first: "we have *such* an High-Priest," says St. Paul. He is a High-Priest called of God, perfect, eternal and consecrated with an oath; he is also holy, harmless and undefiled; he has been separated

from sinners and exalted on high, that in the holiest of all above he may minister on our behalf. And in that holy place to which he has been thus exalted, in what position does he appear? Let us listen and adore! He is "SEATED on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens." This epistle was doubtless read to the different Hebrew churches, and we Gentiles cannot conceive how these words must have thrilled a Hebrew audience. Jesus is spoken of as sitting within the holiest above, and the seat which he occupies is declared to be the Father's throne. Now the legal High-Priest entered into the earthly holiest, and reverently stood while he ministered with adoring awe before the majesty of God throned between the Cherubim.¹ To have seated himself at all within these holy precincts "would have been rashness unheard of;"² but to have climbed upon the ark and mercy-seat and taken his place between the cherubim would have been a direct assumption of Divinity. The Hebrews required none to tell them this, and the very thought and mention of such impious audacity would have made a devout Hebrew shudder. And if this was true even of the earthly holiest and of God's earthly throne, what must they have felt when they heard the Apostle declare, in the words which we are now considering, that their High-Priest was sitting within the heavenly holiest, and on God's heavenly throne? They must have understood him to mean that He of whom he was writing was very and eternal God, and that his sacerdotal character and ministry derogated nothing from his perfect equality with the Father. And this, I need not say, is just what he does mean. Many who profess unbounded reverence for St. Paul and his brethren the apostles, have yet ventured to deny that the Divinity of Christ is apostolic doctrine. I am willing to rest the whole question on this single text, provided that a Hebrew, well skilled in the law of Moses, be allowed as the interpreter of its meaning. And let him be an unbelieving Hebrew, that his judgment may be impartial. I have no fear of that judgment. This writer tells us, he would say at once, that

¹ Heb. x. 11.² Hornæ Hebraicæ.

the Crucified sits between the cherubim. His meaning therefore is but too obvious; it is that THE CRUCIFIED IS GOD.

Before leaving these precious words, however, let us go deeper into their contents. We considered in the last lecture, the intercession of Christ for his people. The legal high-priest was in this respect a type of him; but we learn from the words before us, the vast, the inconceivable difference between the intercession of the Son of God and that of the trembling son of Aaron. Jesus *sits* while he intercedes; the communion between him and the Father is THE CONVERSE OF EQUALS; and "FATHER, I WILL,"¹ is the authoritative language of his intercession. How prevalent then, how resistless must that intercession be! Our attention was drawn, in the last lecture, to the character of our High-Priest. We found him, from apostolic testimony, to be loving, merciful and not easily provoked, ready to undertake our cause, and too faithful and true to neglect what is committed to his trust. But oh, what additional consolation we have in the words before us! For they tell us that this loving, merciful, and faithful One is sitting with the Father on his throne.* Surely then there is no extremity in which he is not able to help! Surely there is no depth of guilt and wretchedness on this side of hell, from which such intercession is not able to deliver!

And he is willing as well as able to help us in our extremities. For who is he who thus sits on the Father's throne? Is he the Son of God only? No, he is the Son at once of God and man. When Moses and Aaron "saw the God of Israel, there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone." And Ezekiel tells us that when he saw his glory, there was "above the firmament...the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of A MAN." He then describes the human form. "From the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire." And finally he declares, "This was the

¹ John xvii. 24.

² Rev. iii. 21.

³ Exodus xxiv. 10.

appearance of the likeness of the glory of THE LORD."¹ Here is a plain testimony to the wondrous truth of incarnation. Manhood has been indeed, to use the language of the Athanasian creed, taken "into God;" for "the God of Israel," "the Lord," and "a man," appear in these Scriptures as one person. And they are one person: a Divine and human high-priest is now sitting above the heavens. Could the light inaccessible which shrouds unseen Deity abate itself a little, we should see, as the prophet saw, a man in the midst of the throne; one with a human heart and human feelings, yea one with human hands and feet, and a human side. For he who sits on that throne is the same who said of himself, after he rose to glory, "a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."²

Our High-Priest is indeed a man, and has indeed the feelings of a man. I cannot resist giving an example; it is a most deeply touching one. We read once and once only in the entire New Testament, of Jesus standing in the presence of God. "Behold" said St. Stephen, as they gnashed on him with their teeth, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."³ Whence this incongruity with the text and with other scriptures? Let us not call it incongruity; it is most beautiful and perfect harmony. A mother cannot keep her seat and see her little one fall into the fire; nature constrains her to rise and run to the rescue of her child. Now Jesus says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee."⁴ He could not keep his seat then and see his servant murdered. He ROSE UP when he beheld his first martyr's extremity—our "faithful High-Priest" ROSE UP, that he might bend his eyes with intentest observation on what was passing below. We are told that "all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly" on that persecuted saint, "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."⁵ Well might it appear so, well might it beam

¹ Ezek. i. 26—28.² Luke xxiv. 39.³ Acts vii. 56.⁴ Isaiah xlix. 15.⁵ Acts vi. 15.

seraphic peace and joy; he knew that he was not forgotten. And if we had the faith of St. Stephen, if we lived in the daily consciousness of being remembered by our Saviour on high, our faces would shine as did the face of that noble martyr. No difficulties would perplex, no dangers would affright, no distresses would overwhelm us; in the midst of abounding calamity and sorrow we should still be at peace in God. Alas, why is it not so with us? Why do we ever complain that we are forsaken, friendless or desolate? "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,"¹ and no son of man need be friendless as long as He lives on high. St. Paul proceeds with his argument.

A minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man.

The words "a minister" with which this verse commences, are, from their connection, peculiarly striking. The Apostle has just shewed to the Hebrews that the ministerial office of Jesus derogates nothing from his perfect equality with the Father; and now he shews that this equality with Jehovah does not make him ashamed to minister. The High-Priest sits on the throne; and he who sits on the throne is a minister. But St. Paul would also shew to them what this ministry of Jesus is. He therefore adds, "of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man." They were perfectly aware that the sanctuary and tabernacle which had been pitched by Moses, were figures and shadows of a reality in the heavens. They were also most intimately acquainted with the varied duties and ministrations of their priesthood in the sanctuary and tabernacle on earth. The apostle therefore, in the few words of this verse, taught more to a Hebrew concerning the ministry of Jesus above, than volumes of exposition would have done. But we need not dwell on this ministry at present; as we proceed with the text, it will come under our notice in detail.

¹ Pro. xviii. 24.

I cannot leave this verse however, without dwelling for a moment on the precious instruction which it contains. Jesus is here called "a minister," because he has charged himself with the concerns of the glory of God and the salvation of men. Language cannot express the honour which he has thus stamped on the holy ministry. For every one who assumes holy orders charges himself, in assuming them, with the very same concerns. Well then may we value ourselves on our sacred office: the Head of our order is he who sits upon the throne! But this example of Christ stamps honour not on the holy ministry only, but on all service done to God. We think that by serving God we make him our debtor. It is not so; by permitting us to serve him he has made us his debtors for ever. It is a small thing to say that the holy angels do his bidding; He who sits on the throne counts it his eternal privilege.

This leads us to another truth to which the words before us bear positive testimony, the blessed doctrine of the Trinity. If Jesus is "a minister," there must be a God to whom his ministry is rendered, for no one can minister to himself. And he who renders it is God, for he sits on the throne of God. What can be said to this? To maintain, in defiance of it, unity of person in the Godhead, is plainly to set aside the authority of holy Scripture.

But there is something else contained in the words before us; and it exhibits in a still stronger light both the points which we have now considered. If we would contemplate Jesus as the "consecrated" minister of the sanctuary and true tabernacle, we must see him in Aaron his type. Aaron's consecration as God's high-priest, was threefold. He was first, brought "to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation," and washed with water. The holy garments were then put on him, and he was anointed with oil. And last of all, he was sprinkled with blood, taken from the altar of sacrifice.* Jesus, his glorious antitype, was in like manner, before he performed a single act of ministry, baptized in the Jordan. The Holy Ghost, the true anointing oil, was next

* Heb. vii. 28.

* Exodus xxix. 4—21.

poured on his sacred head; and in the strength of that heavenly unction he went forth to do his Father's work.¹ But his consecration was not yet perfect; he still lacked the blood. Let us follow him to Gethsemane and Calvary, and we shall find that deficiency supplied. For in those hours of suffering and of agony he was sprinkled from head to foot with his own blood, streaming from his own sacrifice. When they wrapped him therefore in his bloody shroud, and laid him in Joseph's sepulchre, he was the fully consecrated High-Priest. And the Father, beholding him as such, raised him from that lowly bed to minister above the heavens. We see in all this, in the most striking manner, the distinctness of personality in the Godhead. The reason given by our blessed Redeemer for desiring baptism, was that it became him to fulfil the righteous will of God. It was the same God, even his eternal Father, who poured down the Holy Ghost on his head. And he consented to his bitter passion, saying "Father,...not as I will, but as thou wilt."² St. Paul has also testified expressly that his resurrection from the dead and exaltation to glory was the act of the Father's mighty power.³ And this does indeed stamp infinite honour on the holy ministry and on the service of God. See how the soul of the Redeemer longed after it! He shrank not from this bitter consecration to its duties, this consecration of agony, shame and death.

St. Paul enters in the three following verses on a detailed explanation of these duties.

For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve in the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

¹ Matt. iii. 13—17. iv. 17—25.

² Matt. xxvi. 39.

³ Ephes. i. 19, 20.

A distinct chain of meaning connects these verses. The Hebrews had believed on Jesus, but they were exceedingly unwilling to see the priesthood of the house of Aaron and its ministrations done away. And in their eagerness to find objections to an unwelcome truth, they might now have asked the Apostle, what proof do you give of your statement that Jesus ministers in the temple above like our high-priest in the temple below? To this he replies by reminding them that every high-priest is ordained to a ministry, that the ministry to which their own priests were ordained was to offer gifts and sacrifices in the sanctuary of God, and that Jesus being as they knew, God's chosen and solemnly-consecrated High-Priest, must "of necessity" have a ministry also. But unbelief is fertile of excuses. Why then do we not see him ministering on earth, as we have been accustomed to see our own priests doing, might be the next question of the Hebrews. To this St. Paul replies, he cannot minister on earth; there is already a priesthood ministering on earth according to the law of Moses, and two divinely-appointed priesthoods cannot interfere in their functions. But if there is a Divinely-appointed priesthood now ministering on earth, the Hebrews might again have said, Why is not such ministry sufficient? Because, answers the Apostle, it is only an example and shadow. You know, he continues, that when Moses made the tabernacle, God told him that it was the copy of a heavenly original. And the Father's holy dwelling-place above, in which the priestly ministrations of the Son are continually carried on, is, he concludes, oh ye Hebrews, that Divine and heavenly original of which your tabernacle and the ministrations of your priests, were designed from the first, as "the example and the shadow."

Let us pause for a moment on these verses. They tell us distinctly what the ministry of the sons of Aaron was,—they were "ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices." To offer a sacrifice was to kill the victim, and sprinkle its blood before the Lord. A gift, on the other hand, was a voluntary expression on the part of any of the sons of Israel, of love and gratitude to his Almighty benefactor; and being brought to

the priest, it was by him presented to God. This ministry of the sons of Aaron, as these verses further tell us, was carried on "in the example and shadow of heavenly things," i.e. in "the tabernacle" of Moses, made and fashioned in all things, "according to the pattern in the Mount." That tabernacle was a shadow of the dwelling place of God above; its services were a shadow of the services proceeding there; its High-Priest and Priests a shadow of the High-Priest ministering there. He, as well as they, has "somewhat to offer;" and the efficacy of their ministry was a type and figure of the efficacy of his. That ministry, within its own border, was full of efficacy. It was able to deliver from the wrath of God in this world; it prevailed also to the discomfiture of Israel's enemies on every side. When the congregation of Israel were gathered against the Lord, after the dreadful vengeance which had alighted on Korah and his company, "Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun." There was no time, be it observed, to offer sacrifice; destruction had already commenced. But the sweet-smelling incense kindled with sacrificial fire, was equivalent to a sacrifice, for it was a memorial of sacrificial blood. Let us mark therefore the efficacy of this act of ministry. "Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation, and put on incense." And as "he stood" with his burning censer "between the dead and the living, THE PLAGUE WAS STAYED." The wrath which was thus averted would have consumed the whole congregation. God had threatened to do so; and though the dreadful pestilence which he had sent, had only begun among the people, it had destroyed fourteen thousand and seven hundred, before the compassionate high-priest, with his utmost speed, arrived to stay its ravages.¹ We may take another example of the efficacy of priestly ministration. When Samuel was judge in Israel, the whole congregation was on one occasion, gathered together at

¹ Numb. xvi. 44.—50.

Mizpeh, and the Philistines hearing it, came up against them. The people in this extremity, besought Samuel to pray for them. "And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord, and cried to the Lord for Israel." "And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle:" but "the Lord thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." The might of the Gentile became weakness before the burnt-offering of the anointed priest. And this was not the only occasion on which God owned the ministrations of his servant; "the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel." In the eventful history of this man of God, we have also another example of the efficacy of priestly ministration. He was himself a gift to the Lord, the gift of his grateful parents. His mother had long waited for offspring; and when she dedicated him her first-born to the Lord, Eli the high-priest who received him at her hand, said "The Lord give thee seed...for the loan which is lent to him." And God owned the blessing of his minister, for he made "the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother;" he bestowed on her "three sons and two daughters." Such were the ministrations of the Jewish high-priests, and such was their efficacy. Let us now consider Christ's better ministrations as they are set forth in the last words of the text.

But now hath he obtained a ministry SO MUCH THE MORE EXCELLENT AS he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

The Apostle designs, not only to tell us that the ministry of Christ is more excellent than that of the sons of Aaron, but to give a measure of the superiority ascribed to it. And this measure is the superiority of his covenant and its promises to the covenant and promises to which they were sureties. We have already had occasion to consider both

1 I Samuel vii. 6—12.

2 I Samuel i. 24—28. ii. 20, 21. Psalms cxlii. 9.

covenants and the promises pertaining to both. The old covenant secured Israel in the possession of the land of Canaan, on condition of their continuing obedient to God. The new covenant has made over to Christ's people the inheritance of eternal glory; and IT IS ESTABLISHED, as we shall see more fully in the next lecture, on the Father's promises of everlasting absolution and of the Holy Ghost. Christ is the Mediator of this covenant, and his ministry in the heavens is THE GUARANTEE of the promises on which it rests.

What then is this ministry? what is the "somewhat" which our High-Priest has to offer above? He offers, as we have already seen, on behalf of those who trust in it, the blood of his own sacrifice. With the legal high-priest there were two acts, While Aaron sprinkled the sacrificial blood within the holiest, the cloud of sweet-smelling incense ascending from his burning censer, enveloped the throne of the Divine majesty between the Cherubim.¹ With Christ there is but one act: his blood presented in the true holiest is at once sacrifice and incense; he "hath loved us, and given himself for us" says St. Paul, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."² Let us drop figures and speak in plain language. The meaning of Christ having carried his blood into heaven is that he makes continual mention there of his "cross and passion," of his "precious death and burial." It were impiety to attempt to conceive how grateful such mention is to the eternal Father; it is indeed sweet-smelling incense, "a savour of rest."³ Were every individual of Adam's family God's obedient servant, were the worlds that roll in space peopled, every one of them, with intelligent beings waiting to do his will, were creation multiplied a thousand fold and filled with righteousness and truth, God would not, he could not, even in this condition of things, have any thing approaching to the glory which is brought to him by the obedience of Christ unto death. For Christ is his coequal Son, "the brightness of his glory" and "express image of his person," by whom also he made the

¹ Leviticus xvi. 12—14. ² Ephesians v. 2. ³ Genesis viii. 21, Margin.

worlds." When Christ therefore was subject to him, bowing his neck to his yoke and willingly bearing his burden, then indeed, to use apostolic language, GOD WAS "ALL IN ALL." The dishonour which we have done and are daily doing to him was more than wiped away by the glory then rendered on our behalf. In Christ also our sin was avenged and God's holiness and justice openly manifested and declared. When Jesus therefore pleads for those who trust in him on the ground of this work of righteousness, he is at once heard and answered. Did the censer of burning incense in the hand of Aaron, as he stood between the dead and the living, avert God's wrath from the bodies of the rebellious Israelites? In answer to the pleading of Jesus, the wrath, which if unchecked would cause eternal death, is averted from his believing people. Did the Philistines presume to draw near to battle while Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, and did that accepted sacrifice discomfit them before Israel? In answer to the pleading of Jesus, the devil, the world and all the spiritual enemies of his people are driven back and discomfited in their malicious attempts against them. And they shall be discomfited to the end. The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. And his hand shall be in like manner against the enemies of his people, all the days of the eternal life of him who intercedes for them above. And this is only one part of Christ's ministry: he has "somewhat" else to offer, even his people's gifts. When we remember the awful majesty of God and the miserable imperfection of our best and holiest services, we may well be ashamed to offer them for his acceptance. But Jesus is not ashamed. These, he says, oh Father, are the services of MY PEOPLE, the expression of their gratitude for that love which has provided for them salvation in me. And a cup of cold water so given and so presented is not disdained by the Everlasting. God is often pleased to make this manifest, as he did in the case of the mother of Samuel, by returning the services of devoted love, in showers of blessing on the grateful offerer's head.

This twofold ministry of the Saviour for his people, let me remark finally, is personal and particular; "I know thee by name"¹ is his language to every one of them. He knows the history and circumstances of each, their past guilt, their present weakness, their dangers, their temptations, their snares. And various and diversified as the circumstances of his people are, the Father's riches in glory treasured up in him are more than sufficient to supply them all.² He is also most intimately and perfectly acquainted with the several difficulties and hindrances which each has to encounter in doing the will of God. And he takes these into his gracious account, when he presents their services before him.

But this ministry of Christ is not on behalf of his people only; it has an aspect of mercy also toward a thoughtless and ungodly world. For Jesus is the sacrifice of the world, and now appears as the slain Son of man on behalf of the sons of men. It is because he does so that the way to God is open, and that the word of invitation and promise, "I will be a father to you" is heard from within the holiest. And it is because his hands are held up in intercession that the day of the world's merciful visitation is lengthened out. For he is the example of his own precept, he prays for them who spitefully use and persecute him.³ Ah, little do his enemies think of this! Little do they think that to these uplifted hands they owe every hour of refreshing sleep, every crust of bread, and every comfort small and great which renders life a boon! He says indeed "I pray not for the world," but we must not narrow by the letter the largeness of the word of God. Our blessed Lord, when he uttered the words referred to, was offering a prayer which from its very nature, could be offered for his people only. But the wicked world had not therefore gone out of his mind, for in the close of that prayer he asks that the church may be one, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."⁴ He also tells us in one of his parables, that the dresser of a vineyard pleaded for a barren fig-tree, saying,

¹ Exodus xxxiii. 17.

² Phillipians iv. 19.

³ Matthew v. 44.

⁴ John xvii. 9, 21.

"Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it."¹ The vineyard is the visible church, God's covenant people; the barren fig-tree is the nominal professor; and he who thus pleads on his behalf, is our glorious advocate on high. And let us follow our Redeemer to Calvary: we shall find him there making intercession for the ungodly in the very height of their ungodliness. "Father, forgive them" was his prayer for those who murdered him, "for they know not what they do."² And this intercession was heard. Forgiveness of this enormous sin and of all their other trespasses was by the Saviour's express command, preached first of all in Jerusalem.³ And it was not till they had added to their guilt in having murdered him the further guilt of rejecting the amnesty published through his blood, that the threatened vengeance descended on their guilty heads. We learn however from this the deeply solemn lesson that God's long-suffering has a limit. He spares to lead us to repentance; and if we are not led to repentance, our judgment shall be more awful in the end. As it was with the Jews in particular, so shall it be with the world in general. Wrath shall proceed from the Lamb,⁴ i.e. from the rejected sacrifice. His blood which is now "under the altar" and pleads for mankind, shall cry with a loud voice on the holy and true Jehovah, to judge and avenge.⁵ Our High-Priest shall take his censer and filling it with fire of the altar, shall cast it to the earth, and there shall be voices and thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake.⁶ Oh, in that fearful day of his awakened wrath, blessed are all they that have put their trust in him!

Let us lay to heart then these solemn and glorious verities. A holy, loving, and merciful High-Priest now sits on the right hand of the throne, the consecrated minister of salvation. Love to us made him welcome that bloody consecration, love to us makes him willing to be a minister. To him we owe it that we are alive this day, and that freedom of access to God, the fountain of life and peace and joy, is this day

¹ Luke xiii. 6—9.² Luke xxiii. 34.³ Luke xxiv. 47.⁴ Revelation vi. 16.⁵ Revelation vi. 9. 10.⁶ Revelation viii. 5.

preached to us. But we must deal with him personally if we would be saved; we must avail ourselves of his blessed offices if we would be delivered from the wrath of God and the rage of Satan, if we would be made meet for God's eternal kingdom. May the Lord in his mercy incline our hearts so to do! Then shall we know that these blessed mysteries of the faith are not the mere articles of a creed, but the words of eternal life. For "God hath given to us ETERNAL LIFE, and this life is in HIS SON."

See Appendix, Note H.



LECTURE XII.

Hebrews viii. 7—13.

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

ST. PAUL has just stated to the Hebrews to whom the old covenant with its promises belonged, that Christ is “the mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises.” No statement could be more offensive to Hebrew ears. And the Apostle perfectly aware of this, proceeds in the verses which we have now read, to prove it from their own scriptures. The words which he cites, are taken from the prophet Jeremiah, and having cited them, he reasons on them. We shall consider his citation and argument in its

application to the Hebrews, and shall then draw out of the whole passage lessons of catholic truth.

Be not offended with me, my brethren, he would say, that I have called God's covenant in Christ better than the covenant which he made with our fathers at Sinai. You fondly imagine that covenant to be perfect, forgetting that if it were indeed so, there should have been neither place nor occasion for a second. But your own prophet Jeremiah expressly speaks of a second. When finding fault with our fathers in God's name, he declares the Divine intention to make "a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah." He also shews the imperfection of the Sinai covenant; it contained, he says, no provision for obedience, and therefore had not prevented our nation from being cast off by the Lord. And he contrasts with it in these respects the new covenant of which he is speaking, which shall contain, he tells you, on the one hand, a promise of everlasting forgiveness, and shall provide on the other, the Holy Ghost to write God's law on his people's hearts. Now in thus speaking of a new covenant, your prophet makes the first old. And surely, concludes the Apostle, what decays and waxes old, cannot be far from abrogation and extinction.

Such is a brief sketch of St. Paul's argument. It suggests to the mind two very important questions. We inquire in the first place, What was the original meaning of Jeremiah in his words here cited? We inquire in the second place, In what sense and for what purpose does St. Paul here cite them? These are indeed "very important questions," for they concern the most vital of all things, i. e. the true and sound interpretation of the holy Oracles of God.

I. The particular prophecy of Jeremiah which St. Paul here cites, is a small portion of a lengthened Divine communication which occupies the thirtieth and thirty-first chapters of that inspired book. Let us just glance at the substance of that communication. It is to tell the prophet that God will bring again the captivity of his people Israel and Judah; that he will break the yoke of strangers off their

necks and burst their bonds ; that they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king. It is to tell the house of Jacob that he will save them from afar ; that though he makes a full end of all the nations whither he has scattered them, he will not make a full end of them ; that he will multiply them that they shall not be few, and glorify them that they shall not be small. It is to tell them that he will be their God and that they shall be his people ; that he hath loved them with an everlasting love and that he will therefore bring them back to himself from all their wanderings with weeping and with supplications. In that day, the blessed vision continues, "shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together, for I will turn their mourning into joy : " in that day, as we are also assured, they shall say of the land of Judah, "the Lord bless thee, oh habitation of justice and mountain of holiness." These things were communicated to the prophet in a dream ; and "I awaked" he tells us, "and my sleep was sweet to me." But the Divine communication was continued. God assured him of his purpose to sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast, and to watch over them to build and to plant, as in time past he had watched to throw down and to afflict them. He assured him moreover that the days were coming when he would make a new covenant with them, a covenant better than the Sinai covenant, a covenant which should bind them to himself for ever. And he concluded by declaring that as surely as the sun, moon, and stars, the ordinances of heaven remained, so surely should his purpose remain, so surely would he gather Israel, and build Jerusalem again. Now what are we to understand by this revelation of the Divine purposes ? Some expositors tell us that its language and the language of every similar prophecy is altogether figurative. Such prophecies, they say, relate entirely to gospel-times. The rebuilding of Jerusalem means the building of the Christian church ; the bringing again Judah's captivity means the gathering of sinners to God ; the old man, the virgin and the youth rejoicing in the dance, means that

God's believing people shall be filled with the joy of his salvation. Now I cannot but regard such interpretations as most deeply dishonouring to the oracles of God. Let them be allowed as sound and true, and these oracles may signify anything or nothing according to our pleasure. If language has meaning, the prophet's intention in the scripture which we have glanced at, is to tell us of God's purpose to rebuild his holy city now for ages trodden down of the Gentile, to gather again his people Israel now exiles in every land, to forgive all their national provocations, and to make them from thenceforth his obedient and devoted children. It was this merciful purpose of God toward his nation which so comforted the heart of Jeremiah. The army of the king of Babylon was then lying round Jerusalem, and the slain with the sword and the sick with the famine met the afflicted patriot's eye on every side.¹ Well therefore might he be comforted! Well might he say, after being visited with so gracious a vision, "I awaked and beheld, and my sleep was sweet to me!"

II. But St. Paul, it may be said, justifies this figurative interpretation of the prophecies, for he declares in the text that this prophecy of Jeremiah has found its accomplishment in the Gospel-church and in the Christian covenant. Those who say so, misunderstand the scope and purpose of the Apostle's argument. He does not declare that the prophecy of Jeremiah has been accomplished: his object is simply to prove to the satisfaction of the Hebrews, from their own scriptures, that there is a better covenant than that established with their fathers at Sinai. He had stated this in the immediate context and would confirm his words. And let it not be said that this cannot be his purpose, because he is speaking, in the context, of the Gospel-covenant and not of the covenant with Israel. For these covenants ARE ONE. The covenant which shall be established with Israel in the day of glory, securing them in the possession of Divine forgiveness and of the Holy Ghost, was established in the days of St. Paul and is established now with the true Israel,

¹ Jeremiah xiv. 18.

God's believing people. The blessed word of Isaiah concerning Israel, "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord,"¹ is in all respects parallel with the prophecy of Jeremiah now before us and awaits its fulfilment at the same time. And yet our blessed Saviour declared it to have a fulfilment in those Israelites indeed, who in the days of his personal ministry, were led to own him as the Christ.² Whilst those therefore are to be blamed who say that the promises of God to Israel relate entirely to Gospel-times, those are to be blamed also who say that they have no relation to them. Whatever respects the Jew and Jerusalem, respects in a higher sense, though the prophets themselves might not be aware of it,³ the true Christian and the church of God. The prophecies are both literal and figurative, for all of them have a double reference.

The Apostle having thus proved, by appealing to an authority which no Hebrew would question, that the covenant of God in Christ was better than the covenant at Sinai, concludes his argument, as we have already seen, by saying "a new covenant maketh the first old," and that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away." He would tell them in other words, you may dislike my doctrine and still cling to the legal covenant, but God will soon settle the matter by removing out of his vineyard this decayed, worn out, and now fruitless tree. And it was so. Within a very few years after this epistle was written, the Jewish state and polity with all the Mosaical institutions and ordinances, were swept with the besom of destruction and vanished from the face of the earth. What a signal attestation was this to the doctrines and reasonings which we have just been considering! Little did the imperial Vespasian and lordly Titus think, as they led their unconquered armies to the desolation of the holy city, that they were accomplishing the word of a despised Jewish preacher who had been put to death at Rome under the reign of Nero! But it is always so. God moves the hearts of the mightiest potentates and turns kingdoms upside down, that he may accomplish his

¹ Isaiah liv. 13.² John i. 47, 49. vi. 45.³ I Peter i. 10—12.

word of truth in the mouth of the meanest of his servants. The prophet Jeremiah of whom we have just been speaking, had declared the Divine purpose to "accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem,"¹ and then to restore her once more. And we read that "in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus...that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom."² And the result of that proclamation was that Judah returned from her captivity and that Jerusalem was rebuilt. Small and great do the bidding and accomplish the word of the Lord. The Roman soldier who contrary to the commands of Titus, threw his flaming firebrand into the temple on the night when Jerusalem was destroyed, thought as little as his general did that he was doing what God's "hand and counsel" had "determined before to be done." For the earthly sanctuary had now done its part, and priestly ministration was to be from henceforth confined to the heavens. And oh with what feelings must the believing Hebrews have contemplated that terrible desolation! As they looked from the shelter of Pella on their holy city in her last extremity, with the Roman eagles clustering round her, the words "READY TO VANISH AWAY" must have rung in their ears continually. And when they saw her destruction consummated, and salt sown where her palaces and the temple of Zion had stood, these words of the then martyred Apostle, and all his words in this epistle, must have been like a voice issuing from the tomb. "He being dead, yet speaketh" to us, must have been the language of every tongue and the feeling of every heart. They had asked him why the Christian High-priest did not minister in the sanctuary on earth. He had told them that this could not be, because a Divinely-appointed priesthood was already ministering there, and he had spoken of a ministration above. And now that sanctuary was destroyed, and God seconding the words of his servant, bade them lift their eyes and hearts from earth to heaven.

¹ Daniel ix. 2.² Ezra i. 1.

Let us now direct our attention from these verses, to what is perhaps the most important subject in the whole range of Christian theology, viz. the peculiar, distinguishing character of the new covenant, the blessed Gospel. I refer again to the text.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

We are informed in these words, what the law was, and what the Gospel is not. The law, as a covenant, was faulty; the very existence of the Gospel proves it to have been so. Had it been faultless, it is not conceivable that "the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah" should have forsaken it.¹ Again, had it been faultless, God would have recalled them to its observance instead of proposing to supersede it. Its faultiness consisted in its containing no provision for obedience, and being in consequence, deficient in security. God promised to be the God of Israel on condition of their continuing obedient. But the obedience ceased and the promise fell to the ground; "they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not." Like every thing which rests on the slippery base of man's free-will, the legal covenant was proved to have its foundation on the sand. No such faultiness belongs to the gospel, as the text goes on to shew.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to

¹ Jeremiah xiii. 11.

them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

From these words we learn what the Gospel is; it contains, we are told, a perfect provision for obedience, and its security is absolute and eternal. It differs then essentially from the Law. This difference consists, say some expositors, in the difference of their conditions. The law demanded perfect obedience, but promised no grace for its performance; whereas the Gospel accepts sincere obedience, and promises grace to all who ask it. It is truly amazing that men should write in this way. It proves that human intellect and reason are as unable now to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, as the children of Israel were unable of old, to "behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance." Were this sentiment just, the Gospel would be as faulty as the law. For all men are by nature utterly indisposed to render even sincere obedience to God, and utterly indisposed to seek that grace whereby alone they can be enabled to render it. If this then be the tenor of the Gospel-covenant, where is its provision for obedience? Where is its security? It stands like the law, on the slippery base of man's free will, and nothing can prevent it from failing as the law failed before it. But nothing can be more untrue than this sentiment. If we look with the slightest degree of attention into the text, we cannot fail to perceive that the difference between the law and the gospel consists, not in the difference of their conditions, but in the one HAVING CONDITIONS, whilst the other is WITHOUT THEM. The tenor of the law was, "IF ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, THEN ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me...a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."¹ A conditional promise implies necessarily a conditional threatening. And we find God accordingly saying to Solomon, "IF ye

¹ Exodus xix. 5, 6.

shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments...THEN will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them."¹ But we shall search in vain for either conditional promise or threatening in the statement of the gospel which the text contains. It consists in the first place, of an unconditional promise of sanctifying grace. "THIS is the covenant, saith the Lord;—I WILL put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts: I WILL be to them a God, and THEY SHALL be to me a people: ALL SHALL know me from the least to the greatest." This promise is based in the second place, on another as unconditional as itself,—a promise of forgiving mercy so absolute as to make threatening impossible. Having said that he will write his law on his people's hearts, God adds as his reason, "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities WILL I REMEMBER NO MORE." No reason is assigned for this goodness, no condition on the part of the creature is even hinted at. We learn from other scriptures that the reason is his own glory, and the context tells us that the already-accomplished condition is the work of his dear Son. Here then is the perfection of the Gospel. Its security is perfect. Its forgiveness endures as long as the glory of God and the work of Christ endure; and God can never say concerning those who are interested in its benefits, "I regarded them not." Its provision for obedience is also perfect. He who has promised to forgive, has pledged his truth to write his law on his people's hearts, and to teach them effectually to know him. He can never therefore have cause to say concerning them, "They continued not in my covenant." The new covenant makes in this way effectual provision for the salvation of those with whom it is established. For it does not rest like the old, on the base of man's free will; it rests on the determined counsel and unalterable purpose of God.

But if this, it may be said, be indeed the character of

¹ 1 Kings ix. 6, 7.

the new covenant, all men must be saved, No; the new covenant is not established with all men. Its blessings are indeed proclaimed wherever the gospel is declared, and are the heritage of the members of the baptized church. But they must be received before, in the nature of things, they can be enjoyed. God has no where promised to be merciful to the unrighteousness of all men, or even to the unrighteousness of all baptized men. We learn from the express words of the text that this covenant is established with the true Israel, with those who have received the word of life into their hearts, and put their trust in the Saviour whom that word reveals. This is evident from other scriptures also. "Incline your ear and come unto me," says God, speaking by Isaiah, "and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."¹ To incline our ear when God speaks, is to receive his testimony concerning ourselves as creatures ruined by transgression, and concerning the sacrifice and intercession of the Saviour. And to come to God through this believing reception of his word, is to put our unfeigned trust in that sacrifice and prevalent intercession. We receive in doing so, in the Divine faithfulness, the plenary remission of sin. "Hear and your soul shall live," is the assurance of the prophet; "he that heareth my word...shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life,"² is the kindred assurance of the Saviour. And besides being plenary, this remission is everlasting. The covenant which is made with those who thus incline their ear, is expressly declared by the prophet to be "an EVERLASTING covenant;" and its tenor, as we may read in the text, is "their sins and their iniquities will I remember NO MORE." It is also unconditional. No past services are taken into account by God in granting it; no future services are stipulated for before it is vouchsafed. We must indeed keep God's commandments and walk in his ways after having received this remission, but such obedience on our part is THE PROMISE and not the condition of the covenant. For pardon of sin

¹ Isaiah lv. 3.² John v. 24.

is not the only mercy of David, i.e. of Christ the beloved one; sanctifying grace is also made "sure." God, in other words, having granted to us a forgiveness which, from its very nature, is irrevocable and everlasting, is far too jealous of his own glory to permit us to be any longer the servants of the devil. He therefore puts into our minds and writes in our hearts his law of love, teaching and enabling us to walk in love. Having bound himself to us as a God, he binds us to himself as a people by the ties of gratitude, affection, and confidence. And he does not leave us dependent for our growth in Divine knowledge on the uncertainty of human tuition. We may indeed receive much through man, and ought to be receiving continually through the holy ministry as his appointed ordinance; but still if we are his people, he himself will be our real teacher. The Saviour declared of the true Israel, "they shall be ALL taught of God."¹ And it is so. "From the least to the greatest," from the babe in Christ to the advanced and experienced father, they are a Divinely-instructed people. The glory of God requires it, for there is no holiness without knowledge. And therefore, despite of the perverted human teaching to which some of them may be exposed, and despite of the lack in the case of others of all opportunities of human instruction, the promise of the text, "all shall know me," is fulfilled to every one of them. These two acts on the part of God must not for an instant be separated; they are the indivisible parts of one great salvation. Justification is on this very account the pledge of glory;² it contains the Divine assurance that he will make us meet for glory. And he will keep his word. "If we confess our sins," says St. John, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."³ And as these things cannot be separated as acts of God, they cannot be separated in the experience of his people. We receive the inestimable boon of Divine forgiveness by making God in Christ our confidence. But St. Paul teaches us expressly in his epistle to the Romans, that the Spirit of God which

¹ John vi. 45.² Romans viii. 30.³ I John 1—9.

enables us to do so, crying in us "Abba Father," makes us also "spiritually minded," leads us in that Father's ways, makes us subject to his law, and teaches us to "mortify the deeds of the body."¹ To speak therefore of confidence in God's mercy having place in any human heart, without the spirit of love and obedience being found beside it, is to speak of an impossibility. It is the spirit of adoption which confides; and it loves also and is obedient, for these three are one. And we cannot confide in Christ's salvation without in the nature of things receiving this Spirit into our hearts. The glorified Saviour declares, "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."² Now he knocks at the door of our hearts in his preached word. And when we hear his voice, and are taught by grace to put our trust in his mercy, he comes into our opened hearts in the power and fulness of his Spirit, and takes up his abode in them for ever. Holiness both of heart and life follow this blessed indwelling. "Abide in me," he says, "and I in you;...I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."³ For as the sap of the tree goes up into the adhering branch and makes it fruitful, so the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Saviour, flows continually into the heart which trusts in that Saviour's mercy, producing both in heart and life, the fruit of holiness to God. These are the provisions of the new covenant; and all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious can bear witness that they have found them sufficient. And its security, I must repeat, is equal to its sufficiency. According to the terms of the old covenant, the mercy of God depended on the obedience of the creature. But these terms are now reversed. Our obedience is now the result of the forgiveness of God; and that forgiveness is in its turn the result of the work of Christ. The "mercies of David" are therefore "sure" for ever.

We learned from the last lecture that Christ is the Mediator of this "better covenant." For his ministry, as eternal

¹ Rom. viii. 5—15.

² Rev. iii. 20.

³ John xv. 4, 5.

High-Priest in the heavens, is the guarantee of the promises on which it rests. This leads me to refer again, in contrast, to the last verse of the text.

In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old: now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

The victorious armies of Rome, as we have been already reminded, burst with violence into the earthly temple, interrupted the ministering priest in the exercise of his functions, mingling most probably his blood with his sacrifice, and burnt the dwelling-place of God's name to the ground. But we who trust in Christ have no such catastrophe to fear. The heavenly sanctuary in which he ministers is beyond the rage both of man and Satan. No enemy shall to all eternity set foot within its sacred precincts; no rude spoiler's hand shall interrupt the ministrations of our High-Priest at the golden altar which is before the throne. And the interests which depend on their continuance are therefore safe for ever. The legal covenant vanished away because it had served its temporary purpose, and having done so, had decayed and waxed old. The Christian covenant shall abide for ever, because it is ordained for an eternal purpose and has in it no principle of decay. We see this plainly; the blessed Gospel is as fresh at this moment as when it was first announced from heaven. It is still able to minister to the believer's heart that heavenly peace which made the apostles fearless of the frowns of the Jewish council;¹ which made the face of St. Stephen, as they went about to slay him, shine like the face of an angel;² which made Paul and Silas at midnight in the dark dungeon pray and sing praises to God.³ Moreover Christ is as able now to write his law on his people's hearts, as when he transformed the drunken, covetous, and adulterous Corinthians into a people filled with faith and utterance, with knowledge, diligence

¹ Acts v. 41, 42.

² Acts vi. 15.

³ Acts xvi. 25.

and love.¹ And, blessed be God, that grace is not waxed feeble which constrained all that looked on them to bear witness of the Thessalonians that they had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven."² This undecaying energy of the blessed Gospel announces its eternal character. And when this world shall have given place to the world of glory, that eternal character shall appear. For the Most High shall then dwell as a Father in the midst of his saved children; and they, transformed by his grace into the very image of his holiness, shall do his commandments and hearken to the voice of his word. The new covenant shall thus bring, through everlasting ages, fresh and continual accessions of glory to God and blessedness to his people; and shall never vanish away, or be superseded world without end.

Are we then, interested in the benefits of this covenant of peace? We have already seen that it is established with the true Israel; that God, in the language of our Church, "pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." Is this then our character? Let us not say that such a question makes salvation conditional after all. If we know what faith and repentance really are, we shall never call them conditions of salvation; for a condition is something to be done. But though not conditions, they are necessary; the very nature of salvation makes them so. The father of the prodigal sends to seek his wandering child. The messenger tells the wanderer that his father's love remains the same, that his mercy longs to forgive and forget the past, that he waits to bestow on him once more the place, the provision, and the honours of a son. And it surely does not alter the unconditional character of these assurances of mercy, that return to the paternal roof is declared to be necessary before even one of them can be made good. Let us take another illustration. Some poor, half-famished mendicant comes to us, imploring relief. It surely does not take from the unconditional character of our bounty, that we bid him stretch forth his

¹ I Cor. vi. 9—11; II Cor. viii. 7.

² I Thess. i. 9, 10.

hand to receive it. Now both these cases, though human pride loves not to hear it, set forth the truth which we are now considering. Repentance is return to God, and faith stretches out the beggar's hand. The Gospel reveals a mercy which longs to forgive the past, a love which all our sins have not been able to quench, and which seeks to bless us eternally. But we must arise and go to our father before either of these things can be. Again, we must believe the Gospel-testimony and thankfully accept the pardon which it proclaims; we must consent to be saved: God saves no man against his will. But this is all. There is nothing between any man and salvation except unwillingness to return to God, and unwillingness to receive his mercy. "If we confess our sins" says the apostle, "he is faithful and just to forgive:" "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord," says the Psalmist, "and thou forgavest."¹ Nothing is asked from us, save that we feel our necessity and are willing to be forgiven. This unconditional mercy is ours in the blood of Jesus; let us believe in it, and it is ours in possession for ever. To receive it will indeed lay us under the obligation of being henceforth the servants of God, and for his holy service we have in ourselves no ability. But let us not hesitate on this account; he will provide us with ability. If we receive him for our God, he will take care that we shall be to him a people; he will put his laws into our minds and write them in our hearts. And our knowledge of him shall not depend on human teaching; it shall be the fruit of personal, experimental acquaintance with the Lord. Taught by himself, and growing in the knowledge of his character and gracious will, we shall be enabled to the last day of our earthly pilgrimage to walk in his blessed ways.

It is the peculiar glory of this salvation that it is entirely the work of God. The forgiveness which it proclaims is the fruit of the death of Christ; the holiness to which it leads is the work of the Spirit of Christ. As for us, we are only receivers, receivers of undeserved mercy and of equally

¹ Psalm xxxii. 5.

undeserved grace. "We are the clay, and thou our potter," says Isaiah;¹ "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works," is the kindred acknowledgment of St. Paul.* May God of his infinite mercy teach us the truth of all this! And while his good Spirit discovers to us our guilt and pollution, may He also incline our hearts to receive the salvation of our God!

¹ Isaiah lxiv. 8.

* Ephesians ii. 10.

LECTURE XIII.

Hebrews ix. 1—8.

“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.”

WE have been considering the apostolic declaration that the covenant made between God and Israel at Sinai, was decaying and waxing old and ready to vanish away. Apparently afraid lest by this language he should seem to the Hebrews to pour contempt on that covenant, St. Paul proceeds in this chapter, and in the first half of the following, to explain more at large than he has yet done, that the Sinai-covenant had indeed ordinances of Divine service, but that these, though Divinely ordained, were not perfect

ordinances, being designed for no other purpose than as shadows of the reality now brought in by the Son of God. This argument commences in the verses which we have just read. I will endeavour to paraphrase it in its peculiar application to the Hebrews, and then to gather from the whole passage instruction and comfort for ourselves.

Before proceeding to this however, let me observe that I am thoroughly satisfied, both from the best authorities and also from the text itself, that an error has crept into the passage before us as it stands in our translation. The expression which is rendered "golden censer" might and unquestionably ought to have been rendered golden incense-altar. Our translators have rendered it censer, because they found it enumerated among the furniture of the holy of holies, whereas the incense-altar was without the veil. But the most ancient manuscript in existence relieves us from this perplexity by reading the second, third and fourth verses as follows:—

*"For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread, AND THE GOLDEN INCENSE ALTAR; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the ark of the covenant."*¹

Do not suppose, my brethren, St. Paul would say, that I seek to disparage the covenant of God with our fathers. I know that it, as well as the new covenant, had ordinances of Divine service, and a sanctuary, though a material one, in which that service was performed. And being, as I am, "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," I have not forgotten either the construction of that sanctuary or the details of these ordinances. "There was a tabernacle made," consisting of two apartments. The first apartment contained the golden candlestick with its seven branches, the golden table whereon shew-bread was placed before the Lord continually, and the golden incense-altar. This apartment was called

¹ Penn's New Covenant.

the holy place, and was separated from the outer court by a vail. But at the further end of the holy place was a second vail, and behind this vail was the inner apartment of the tabernacle, "called the holiest of all," containing "the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold." Within this ark were laid up the golden pot containing the manna on which our fathers fed in the desert, "and Aaron's rod that budded," in testimony that he was God's chosen high-priest, and the two tables of stone on which God's covenant with Israel was engraved. And over it were "the cherubims of glory," continually contemplating with their faces, and shadowing with their wings, the mercy-seat which was between them. I cannot, continues the apostle, "speak particularly" of these details at present. But let me further remind you, that "when these things were thus ordained," and while the priests went continually into the holy place, "accomplishing the service of God," the High-priest alone was permitted to enter into the holiest of all. And even he had this privilege only once a year, and never without carrying in his hand sacrificial blood, which he presented "for himself, and for the errors of the people." "The Holy Ghost," concludes the Apostle, who shewed to Moses in the mount the pattern of the tabernacle, appointed these ordinances of service. And by this last ordinance he plainly shewed the imperfection, from the beginning, of that covenant in which you boast. For the exclusion from God's presence of all but the High-Priest, and the permission even of his approach on certain conditions and at certain seasons only, was a most significant attestation "that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle KEPT ITS STANDING."

Let us now consider the text for our own edification. It will remind us in the first place, that we have in reality what the Jew had only in symbol: it will shew to us in the second place, that while the Jew was debarred from the holy things of God, and from God himself, we have by the new covenant, unrestrained access to both.

I. Among the things which stood within the holy place

St. Paul mentions the candlestick first in order. The candlestick was of pure gold, and had seven branches. There was no light within the holy place save what its seven lamps afforded; and this light was fed continually with pure olive-oil. When Moses the mediator of the old covenant reared up the tabernacle, "he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, and lighted the lamps before the Lord."¹ Now a very moderate acquaintance with Gospel-truth will enable us to understand the spiritual meaning of all this. The true candlestick is the church. "Being turned," says St. John describing his vision in Patmos, "I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man." And the Son of man said to his servant, "Write the mystery of the seven golden candlesticks...the seven candlesticks are the seven churches."² The number seven is always in Holy Scripture, the symbol of completeness. The seven candlesticks of the Apocalypse and the seven-branched candlestick of Moses set forth therefore one and the same spiritual reality, viz., the complete Church of God. Moreover the purpose of the candlestick of Moses was to give light. And in this also it was an emblem of the church, which has been raised up by God to give forth his heavenly light in the midst of a dark world. Christ expressly declares that his people "are the light of the world," and adds, "neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house."³ Again the pure olive-oil with which the light of the Jewish candlestick was fed continually, symbolized the Holy Ghost. This is evident from the words of Zechariah. He had a vision of "a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon;" he saw also two olive-branches, emptying oil into this golden candlestick. And when he asked for an explanation of this vision, he received for answer "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."⁴ The Spirit

¹ Exodus xl. 24, 25.² Rev. i. 12, 13, 19, 20.³ Matt. v. 14, 15.⁴ Zechariah iv. 2-6, 11-14.

of God then is the true oil ; and the meaning of the answer which the prophet received was that God's work was to be done in the world, not by human might or power, but by his church filled with the Spirit. This word of the Lord was indeed most strikingly verified. When Jesus the antitype of Moses, rose from the dead and entered on the fulness of his office as Mediator of the new covenant, he set up his candlestick, poured in the oil, and lighted the lamps. In other words, he gathered his church, filled it with his Spirit, and endowed his ministries. Human might and power were altogether lacking, for the chief of these ministries was committed to despised and illiterate fishermen. Nevertheless the work of God was done. His light shining forth from his church, clear and strong, chased before it by its dazzling brilliancy both Jewish superstition and Pagan idolatry, triumphed over all the power of darkness, and gathered to his name in every land. It was the commandment of God concerning the Jewish candlestick, that its light should burn "always."¹ And this has been fulfilled in the antitype. The lamps of the true candlestick which the Mediator of the new covenant lighted on the day of Pentecost, have never since gone out. During the ages which have intervened from that day to the present moment their light has been shining forth, and, blessed be God, is shining still. It shines in the life and conversation of every true Christian ;² it shines in the written testimony which in her creeds and liturgies the church bears for God ; it shines especially in the ministered word of life. Let us therefore mark well the difference between the legal and the Christian covenant. The Jew had a seven-branched candlestick of gold illumining the holy place ; we have the light of eternal life shining in the church of God.

After the candlestick, St. Paul mentions the table of shew-bread. His words, if taken literally, are "the table and the setting forth of bread." This table was of shittim-wood, overlaid with gold. It stood northward in the holy place, opposite the candlestick, whose sevenfold light fell full upon

¹ Exodus xxvii. 20.

² Matthew v. 16.

it. Twelve loaves of bread, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, were, Sabbath by Sabbath, placed on it before the Lord, and were, Sabbath by Sabbath, removed. And when removed they were given to the priests, who ate of them in the holy place, by the light of the holy candlestick.¹ The name of this table, if the original Hebrew be exactly rendered, is table of the presence. It stood before the vail which concealed the Divine glory, and those who ate of its bread, did so before God. Now the reality of all this under the Christian covenant, is, blessed be God, abundantly plain. The shittim-wood and gold of which this table was composed, set forth the humanity and Divinity of Christ our Saviour. And the bread which was placed upon it, sets forth the true bread which is his body; visibly presented on his table as the memorial of his one sacrifice; and as the one food of his royal priesthood, his believing children throughout all the earth. It is indeed HIS table, the table OF THE PRESENCE. He himself was present at the first celebration of this feast; and though now absent in body, he is still spiritually present at every faithful celebration of it. He said, when he first distributed this true shew-bread, "this is my body," and he says so still, to the believing recipient. We meet therefore with himself at this table, and eat bread before God. And it is no unintelligent eating, no eating "we know not what." The light of eternal life shining in the church of God, falls full upon this sacred table, making its provision to strengthen the faith of his children, to animate their love, and to encourage their hope to the end. It reveals to us what we eat and drink, the flesh and blood of the Son of man;² that "the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ;"³ that "as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew the Lord's death till he come."⁴ Let us behold, I say again, the difference between the legal and the Christian covenant. The Jew had a

¹ Leviticus xxiv. 1—9.

² John vi. 53.

³ I Corinthians x. 16.

⁴ Corinthians xi. 26.

golden table with shew-bread on it, for the priests to eat: Christ the Son of God and man invites us to eat of himself, "the bread of God which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."¹

After the table of shew-bread, according to our amended version of the text, comes the incense-altar. It also was of shittim-wood, overlaid with gold. "No strange incense" nor "burnt-offering" might be offered on it; such things would have polluted it. Sweet incense was burnt on it morning and evening, and once in every year the horns of it were tipped with the blood of the great annual atonement. "Now incense is the symbol of prayer. When he had taken "the book," says St. John in the visions of the apocalypse, "the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints."² The reality therefore of this golden incense-altar is the permission given to us of holy worship, of drawing near to God and pouring out our hearts before him, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, the Son of God and man. But we must take heed that we do not make our prayers our expiation, counting the number of them as the Romanist counts his beads, and hoping by the multitude of our services, to avert the wrath and purchase the favour of God. The sacrifices under the law were offered on the brazen altar which stood in the outer court; and if a Jewish priest had presumed to offer even one of them on the golden incense-altar, he would have been struck dead for his impiety. But while this altar was for incense only, its horns were tipped with blood to tell that atonement had been made. And the case is the same with its antitype. Calvary is our brazen altar, sin was made an end of there.⁴ And now, as we pour out our hearts to God, nothing more is required of us save that we tip the horns of the golden altar with blood, i.e. that we draw nigh with confidence of sin forgiven through the finished sacrifice of Christ. To

¹ John vi. 33.² Exodus xxx. 1—10.³ Rev. v. 8, original.⁴ Daniel ix. 24.

draw near with a doubtful mind is to dishonour that finished sacrifice; to draw near that we may make our own expiation, is to provoke God to reject us for ever. And we must take heed that we offer no strange incense on this altar, i. e. that we come not to God with a divided heart, full of worldly affections and unmortified sinful desires. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."¹ As Christ is the way to God in his blood, righteousness and intercession, so we must receive his Spirit that we may worship God aright. "For through Him," says St. Paul, "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father."²

Such then were the three things which stood in the first apartment of the Jewish tabernacle, viz. the candlestick, the table, and the altar, and such was their spiritual meaning. We have instead of them, in the Christian church, the light of salvation, the bread of life, and the privilege of holy worship through Jesus Christ our Lord. The light of salvation which shines there is designed by God to follow us through every step of our earthly pilgrimage, to guide us in our daily perplexities, to reveal every danger which lurks in our path, and to shew the way of safety. Christ the bread of life broken for us there, and especially in the Lord's supper, is that bread on which we ought always to be feeding, that we may have strength for the service of God. "Enter into thy closet," said the Lord Jesus, "and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."³ In all places, in all circumstances, and in every variety of condition, we are invited to send up our cry to God through Jesus Christ; and no prayer presented in his name, shall be despised or disregarded on high. This is the glorious privilege which the Christian covenant has bestowed on us; a privilege with which the golden altar and ministering high-priest of the Jew are not for an instant to be compared.

But the tabernacle of Moses contained something more sacred than even these holy things. Behind the second veil,

¹ John iv. 24.² Ephesians ii. 18.³ Matthew vi. 6.

within the holiest of all, was "the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold," containing within it the pot of manna, the high-priest's rod and the tables of the covenant, and having over it the mercy-seat, shadowed by the cherubims of glory. The appointment of God that these things should be within the holiest, teaches us plainly that there is something more sacred than even the holy gospel and the spiritual presence of Christ with us here, as the bread of life and the way to the Father. For while the holy place is the type of the Church, the holiest is the type of heaven. The spiritual presence of Christ in the Church, and the Church itself, are indeed sacred things; but the bodily presence of Christ and the manifested glory of God in heaven are more sacred still, as heaven itself is a more sacred place. Let us not forget however, that he who is spiritually present with his people on earth, is the same Christ who is visibly present in heaven. This is most beautifully set forth in the type. The shewbread-table and incense-altar stood without the veil, while the ark was within it; but all three were made of one material, viz., shittim-wood and gold, because all three typified one person. For the same Christ, the Son of God and man, is at once in the holy place and in the holiest; spiritually present with his suffering Church below, and leading the praises of his triumphant Church above. The ark of the covenant evidently sets forth the Saviour. It was made, as has been already mentioned, of shittim-wood "overlaid round about" or entirely "with gold," so that no part of the wood was visible.¹ And in this we discern him who has taken "manhood into God," and arrayed it with the majesty and glory of God. During his humiliation, the sinless frailty and infirmity of that manhood did indeed appear, but he had not then ascended into the holiest. He is conscious of no infirmity, no frailty, no weakness now; the tender human heart appears in the holiest, and it alone. The contents of the ark are a further proof that this was its spiritual meaning. The first of them was "the golden pot that had manna." God fed Israel with manna, as they jour-

¹ Exodus xxv. 10, 11.

neyed through the barren desert on their way to the promised land, that they might know "that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."¹ And Moses by his command, laid up a pot of this manna, that Israel in their successive generations, might see the bread wherewith God had fed their fathers.² All this is a most striking type of God's dealings with the true Israel. They have been journeying in all generations and are journeying still to the better, the heavenly country, the land of their inheritance. Their journey lies through an evil world, a place as barren of any thing which can sustain the soul, as the sandy desert which lay between Egypt and Canaan was barren of corn and wine. But God provides for them: his word with its instructions, its promises, and its consolations, has been their stay in every age and will be their stay to the end. I believe that the pot of manna is the type of Holy Scripture. In turning over the sacred pages of the book of God, we see the bread wherewith he has fed our fathers, the truth which, in its gradual developement, has been the stay of the faithful from the days of Abel till now. But all this truth is contained in Jesus. He is the Word of the Father, and "the Word was made flesh"³ that we might know the Father. We have access to the true manna, because it is laid up in him the true ark of the covenant of peace; "Lord, to whom shall we go?" said St. Peter, "THOU HAST the words of eternal life."⁴ The ark contained besides, "Aaron's rod that budded." When Israel murmured against the priesthood of Aaron, God commanded the princes of the several tribes to lay up their rods before the testimony, and the rod of Aaron was among them. And in the morning, in token that he was God's chosen high-priest, his rod "was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds."⁵ We need not go far to find the spiritual meaning of this. In token that he who had been disallowed of men was indeed God's chosen high-priest, his priestly rod, after he rose and

¹ Deut. viii. 3.² Exodus xvi. 32—34.³ John i. 14.⁴ John vi. 68.⁵ Numbers xvii. 1—9.

ascended, began to bring forth buds and to bloom blossoms. The Holy Ghost, in other words, vouchsafed in answer to his priestly intercession,¹ began on the day of Pentecost, to put forth his life-giving energy. Thousands on thousands, first of bigoted Jews and afterwards of idolatrous Gentiles, were gathered to the faith of the Saviour; and righteousness, peace and truth began to appear where superstition, cruelty and licentiousness had been. These were the buds and blossoms on our High-Priest's fruit-bearing rod. And that rod, blessed be God, has borne such fruit ever since and bears it still; a people walking in righteousness is still the testimony on earth that the High-Priest who has ascended to glory has "received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost."² The ark contained besides, "the tables of the covenant," i.e. the two tables of stone on which God's law was written.³ This type is plainer than either of the preceding. For Jesus says, as if he meant to interpret it, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart."⁴ And he fulfilled that law in both its tables, when he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is moreover in his heart still, for he teaches his people to fulfil it, And he shall cause it to be fulfilled universally, and God's will to be done on earth as now it is done in heaven, when he comes in the glory of his kingdom. In the ark then with its sacred contents, we meet with Jesus, Jesus who once for us fulfilled all righteousness, Jesus who is now in glory our Prophet, Priest, and righteous King. He has the word of salvation, he has the sanctifying grace and blessed consolations of the Comforter, he has the holy authority of God. How much better is this glorious reality than the shadows of the Jew; how much better is the Christian covenant than the law which went before it!

But our subject is not exhausted; we have yet to consider the mercy-seat which was over the ark, and the cherubims of glory which shadowed it. The upper lid of the ark formed the mercy-seat, and at either end of it was a cherubic figure

¹ John xiv. 16, 17: xvi. 7—11.² Acts ii. 33.³ Exod. xxv. 16.⁴ Psalm xl. 8.

of gold. The faces of these figures were toward the mercy-seat, and they shadowed it with their wings, whilst between them appeared the glory of the enthroned God of Israel.¹ The high-priest ministered before that mercy-seat, and the pardon of the God of Israel was dispensed from it. This was evidently intended to set forth God in Christ, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. And the cherubic figures set forth, I believe, the gospel-ministry. This is not indeed a general explanation of their import, but there are strong reasons for it. We find them in a living form, in the prophecy of Isaiah who calls them "seraphim;"² and also in the Apocalypse, where they are called "living creatures."³ Their employment, when Isaiah saw them, was decidedly ministerial, for one of them proclaimed to him the taking away of sin; and they speak of themselves in the Apocalypse, as redeemed men.⁴ Their faces moreover, as St. John saw them and as Ezekiel saw them, were emblematic of the Christian ministry. That ministry is fourfold. "He gave," it is written, "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry."⁵ And the faces of these cherubims were fourfold. "They had the face of a man and the face of a lion on the right side; they had the face of an ox on the left side; they had also the face of an eagle."⁶ The face of the lion the king of beasts, sets forth the Apostleship, the ruling, guiding ministry; and the face of the eagle, the only bird which can gaze at the splendour of the meridian sun, sets forth the Prophet whose office it was to dwell in spirit in the uncreated light of heaven, and to bring down from thence the revelations of the mind of God. The face of the man on the other hand, represents the Evangelist, who went in the name of the Son of Man, proclaiming to the sons of men the love and mercy of their God. And the face of the ox sets forth the Pastor. For the ox was employed by the Jews in treading out the corn, which is declared

¹ Exod. xxv. 17-22.² Isaiah vi. 1-8.³ Revel. iv. 6, 7. v. 8, 9.⁴ Ephesians iv. 11, 12.⁵ Ezekiel i. 5, 10.

by St. Paul to be emblematic of the pastoral ministry.¹ Now, though these four orders of ministry have not been continued in the church, her ministry is still fourfold, i.e. apostolic, prophetic, evangelical, and pastoral. And as such, it was, I believe, represented by these cherubims. I do not say that they represented men. Men indeed hold the ministry, but the thing represented is THE MINISTRY ITSELF, THE MINISTRY OF ETERNAL MERCY, As if to point this out to us, the mercy-seat and cherubims were beaten out of ONE piece of gold, and the faces of the cherubims were toward the mercy-seat. They are called in the text "cherubims of glory." This is a strong confirmation of the view which has just been given. For St. Paul, speaking of the gospel-ministry, says, "if the ministration of death...was glorious...how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." He also tells us wherein this glory consisted; "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."² This is most instructive. There was no light within the holiest save the effulgence of the Divine Majesty, reflected from the burnished gold of the cherubims and mercy-seat. If that effulgence had been withdrawn, the holiest would have been a place of thick darkness, for the gold had no light of its own. The glory of the cherubims then, was a reflected and not an inherent glory. And it is the same with the Christian ministry. Its glory consists in reflecting Christ: let it cease to do so and its glory is gone, its light is turned into darkness. Let us mark then once more, the difference between the legal and the Christian covenant. The Jew had God throned on a material ark, between two golden figures, and ready to pardon ceremonial guilt. But he is proclaimed to us in the ministry of eternal mercy, as forgiving all iniquity, through "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son," which "cleanseth from all sin."³ And we are taught by the position of the cherubims, that the word of that ministry is a word from the holiest, from the throne; that Christ in their message, to use the

¹ I Timothy v. 17, 18.² II Cor. xiii. 7—9. iv. 5.³ I John i. 7.

words of St. Paul in another place, is speaking to us "from Heaven."

II. Though these sacred things of the tabernacle of Moses were only shadows, Israel had no access to them. The priests might enter into the holy place, and the high-priest once a year into the holiest of all; but no other Israelite, from infancy to grey hairs, crossed the threshold of that awful sanctuary. Terror prevented such approach. "Behold, we die," they said, "we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?"* Conceive the feelings of an Israelite, if this edict of exclusion had been repealed; conceive his astonishment as he stood for the first time within the holy place, and gazed upon its golden beauties, as the blazing candlestick revealed them! Conceive his increased astonishment, if, as he stood there, an invisible hand had rent the vail and disclosed the holiest; conceive his bewildered extacy if a voice from between the cherubims had invited him to enter in! But this is just what the Lord has done for us. The holy place is now opened, with its candlestick, its table, and its altar. No terror repels us from beholding the light of the gospel, from taking and eating of Christ the bread of life, from pouring out our hearts to God through him. And when we come into the holy place, we find that the holiest too is open. This requires however a few words of explanation. The holiest in the Jewish tabernacle was, as has been already said, a type of heaven. Entrance into the holiest therefore as a future thing, is the privilege of dwelling with God in the sanctuary above. And such entrance as a present thing, is the privilege of approaching heaven's glorious King, "crying Abba Father." His people under the former dispensation had no such privilege; they were little better than servants. And this humbling truth was signified to them, as the last verse of the text teaches, by their exclusion from the holiest in the tabernacle. Let me refer for confirmation of this view, to the words of St. Paul in another place. "The

* Heb. xii. 25.

* Numbers xvii. 12, 13.

heir," he tells us, "as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant." "Even so we," he continues, speaking of the saints of the former covenant, "when we were children, were in bondage." He next contrasts with this servile bondage the liberty of the new covenant, telling us that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son...to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And finally, he addresses those to whom he was writing, "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son."¹ This filial boldness then is entrance into the holiest, the privilege which *was not*, "while as the first tabernacle kept its standing" as the dwelling-place and sanctuary of the Most High. These considerations explain the statement which has just been made. The light which shines in the holy place reveals God's paternal love; the bread on the table confirms the testimony; and when we draw nigh to the altar to worship, we have Christ's permission and commandment to say "Our Father which art in heaven."² We are overcome by this amazing grace, and send up that filial cry. And no sooner does it ascend than it is answered. A voice from between the cherubims, visible now through the rent vail, answers it. Draw nigh hither, it proclaims, "I will be a Father unto you."³ But we have not yet seen all the grace and tender mercy of the new covenant, as contrasted with the old. We read that when the ark of God returned from its captivity in the land of the Philistines, the men of Bethshemesh were so rejoiced to see it that they looked into it. But God rebuked this presumption by smiting fifty thousand of them.⁴ We read again, that when David was bringing up the ark to Jerusalem in a new cart, Uzza, who drove the cart, "put forth his hand and took hold" of the ark, "for the oxen shook it." But "the anger of the Lord was kindled against him, and he smote him there for his error, and there he died."⁵ No such

¹ Galatians iv. 1—7.² Luke xi. 1, 2.³ II Corinthians vi. 18.⁴ I Samuel vi. 19.⁵ II Samuel vi. 6, 7.

terror surrounded the true ark of the covenant; "Behold my hands and my feet," he said, "that it is I myself: handle me and see."¹ "That which was from the beginning," says St. John, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life."² We read also that at the last supper "there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved."³ And these things were written that we might be encouraged to press close to the same Saviour, and to make the same bosom our resting-place. For "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," says St. John, "that ye also may have fellowship with us...that your joy may be full."⁴ Are we afraid to accept this gracious invitation? Let us look into the heart of Jesus, and our fear shall cease. We need not dread the vengeance which overtook the Bethshemites: God himself has now removed the covering of his ark; the bitter cross has revealed that heart of love. Let us understand then the fulness of new covenant grace. It is more than entrance into the holiest; it is the most endeared familiarity with him who fills the holiest; it is "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."⁵ Let us express in one word then every thing which this subject has taught us. The Jew was debarred from his shadows; but we are invited to draw nigh to the life-giving, the perfect, the all-glorious substance.

The language of the last verse of the text leads me, before concluding, to add one remark further. It is in vindication, or rather in illustration of the wisdom and mercy of the Holy Ghost manifested in holy Scripture. He has devoted only one chapter to the account of the Creation; he has devoted twelve chapters to the account of the tabernacle of Moses. The scornful infidel asks, Is this worthy of God? I answer, as a Christian, that it is infinitely worthy of him. The Bible was intended to teach us, not geology and natural history, but the way of eternal salvation: and the history of

¹ Luke xxiv. 39.

² I John i. 1.

³ John xiii. 23.

⁴ I John i. 3, 4.

the Creation is therefore only glanced at, while the tabernacle is dwelt upon. For the tabernacle contains in type and figure, the blessed mysteries of salvation. Every one who has deeply considered the subject, cannot fail to have perceived that all human illustrations of the gospel are essentially defective. But the tabernacle is the Divine illustration of it, and is without defect. What we have already learnt from this precious epistle, may teach us the truth of this remark : and we shall have increasing proof of it as we proceed. Let us not listen then to those who tell us that we have nothing to do with the Old Testament. In neglecting the Old Testament, we neglect a divinely-vouchsafed assistance toward the understanding of the New. Let us pray God that our acquaintance with the Old Testament may daily increase. And may Jesus give us to see in his cross and resurrection, the fulfilment of all which is written "in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning him!"¹

¹ Luke xxiv. 44.

LECTURE XIV.

Hebrews ix. 9—14.

"Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God. purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

WE considered, in the last lecture, the account given by St. Paul of the worldly sanctuary and ordinances of Divine service, pertaining to the Jewish covenant. We have now to consider what he goes on to shew to the Hebrews, viz. that this worldly sanctuary was a figure of the true sanctuary above, and that these ordinances of service, in themselves imperfect and not available for the salvation of the soul, were figures of the perfect ordinances of salvation, now brought in by the Son of God. To this deeply important argument let us therefore turn our attention.

The six verses which we have now read may be divided into pairs. The first two set forth the figurative character of the Jewish tabernacle, and the imperfection of its ordinances. In the two which follow, St. Paul points the Hebrews to the true tabernacle and declares the real ordinances of salvation. In the last two he reasons on his statements, pressing on their attention the perfect character of the new covenant of peace. We have *first*, the figurative character of the Jewish tabernacle, and the imperfection of its ordinances.

WHICH HAS BEEN A FIGURE DOWN TO THE PRESENT TIME, *in which ARE offered both gifts and sacrifices*, THAT CANNOT make him that DOES the service perfect, *as pertaining to the conscience*; WHICH HAVE BEEN IMPOSED, TOGETHER WITH meats and drinks and divers washings—*carnal ordinances*, ONLY till the time of reformation.

It is of the tabernacle that St. Paul has been speaking in the immediately-preceding context; he therefore means to tell the Hebrews in these words that the tabernacle was a figure. It was a figure of God's true dwelling-place above, of which he speaks in Isaiah,—“heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me?”¹ It “has been a figure,” says the Apostle, “down to the present time,” i. e. from the day that Moses reared it until these days of the Christian dispensation, when the reality has been revealed. In this figurative house of God, he goes on to say, there “are offered both gifts and sacrifices.” For the temple was then standing, and the priests were still occupied in their ministry, i. e. in presenting to God the gifts of his people, and sacrificial blood for the putting away of sin. But these gifts and sacrifices, adds St. Paul, “cannot make him that does the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience,” i. e. cannot afford to the worshipper the blessing of peace with God. A Jew had sinned and brought his sacrifice; it was duly offered for him. He next brought his gift; it was duly presented and accepted.

¹ Isaiah lxvi. 1.

May I now believe, he said to the ministering priest, that I am absolved by God from sin? may I look without fear to the dreadful day of judgment? may I infer from the acceptance of my gift, that my person is eternally accepted? You are cleansed from ceremonial guilt, would be the priest's answer; you have no occasion to dread temporal judgment at the hand of God. You may also infer from the acceptance of your gift, that he regards you as one of the holy people, and that you are entitled to all the benefits of the covenant of God with Israel. But of any thing further, the priest would say, I dare not speak; my ministry reaches not to the world to come. And so the worshipper returned from the tabernacle or temple disappointed and unrelieved. This, says St. Paul to the Hebrews, is the imperfection of your priestly ministry. Why then was such a ministry ordained, the Hebrews might have asked,—why were such gifts and sacrifices appointed by God to be offered? The ministry was ordained, answers the Apostle, and the gifts and sacrifices were appointed, “along with meats and drinks and divers washings—carnal ordinances, only till the time of reformation.” These words, besides being a satisfactory answer to the question which we have supposed to be asked, throw on this whole subject further light of the most important kind. A fallen creature in order to salvation, needs something more than the forgiveness of sin; he needs deliverance from sin's moral power, he needs to be made holy that he may be capable of fellowship with God. Let us suppose for a moment that an Israelite feeling, as devout king David did, the depravity of his nature, and desirous like him, of avoiding sin and of attaining to holiness, had repaired to the ministering priest. The priest would have told him, that if he would avoid uncleanness, he must not eat of the coney, the hare or the swine, of the eagle, the ossifrage or the ospray.¹ He would have told him further, that if he desired to be peculiarly holy, he was at liberty to consecrate himself to God by taking the vow of the Nazarite. And this vow required him, the priest would have said, to

¹ Leviticus xi. 2—8, 13.

drink no wine nor strong drink, and to eat nothing that came "of the vine-tree, from the kernels even to the husk."¹ He would have instructed him finally that if he was unclean by having touched the dead body of a man, or by having come in contact with a leper, or by having carried the carcase of a sin-offering, he might be cleansed again and mingle with his brethren as before, by bathing his flesh in water.² But if the inquirer had answered, I am seeking the cleansing, not of the flesh but of the heart; tell me how I may be delivered from the real uncleanness of sin, and how I may attain to fellowship with the Holy One of Israel, the priest must have replied, my ministry reaches not to the heart, the ordinances with which I am charged are ordinances for the flesh only. And so, whether the devout worshipper sought peace of conscience on the one hand, or purity of heart on the other, he found the provisions of the law of Moses utterly unsuited to his need. The believing Hebrews were perfectly aware of this. And they were therefore able to estimate the argument of the Apostle in the text, that God never designed to put off his people with such miserable shadows; that he had appointed the sacrifice which could not pacify the conscience, and the washing which could not cleanse the heart, "only till the time of reformation."

This time of reformation was at the first advent of Christ, as the two following verses of the text plainly shew. For they set forth to us, *second*, the true tabernacle, and the real ordinances of salvation.

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, THROUGH a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

This agrees exactly with the testimony of St. Paul in another place. He tells the Galatians that God's people

¹ Numbers vi. 1—4.

² Leviticus xv. Numbers xix.

under the former dispensation "were in bondage under the elements of the world: but" that, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son...to redeem them that were under the law."¹ The Galatian, as well as the Hebrew believers, were in danger of returning to the law: St. Paul would therefore tell both of them that God, when he instituted the legal ordinances, had the time of reformation in his eye, and that he designed these ordinances to continue only till that time should arrive. Christ, who by his appearing introduced this time of reformation, came, as the text declares, "an High-Priest of good things to come." For by his priestly ministry he has obtained for us peace of conscience, and grace that we may serve God. And both these blessings were "good things to come" until his appearing; the legal high-priests, as we have already seen, could minister neither the one nor the other. The saints who lived before his appearing did indeed enjoy a measure of both; but this was not because the shadows ministered it, it was because their faith pierced the shadows and laid hold of the coming Substance. How great then must have been their joy when that glorious Substance appeared! We need not wonder that Simeon should have said, as he took the infant-Saviour in his arms, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace...for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Nor need we wonder that Anna the prophetess, when she came at the same instant into the temple, should have given thanks "likewise unto the Lord, and spoken of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."² We also observe, from these two scriptures, that salvation and redemption are one. For the essence of both is the same. Salvation consists in peace of conscience, and grace that we may serve the living God. And redemption in its larger and more comprehensive sense, consists of the same blessings. Having told us that for these blessings we are indebted to the High-Priest of the new covenant, the Apostle goes on to tell us in what way he has obtained them, viz. by entering in "once into the holy place," "through a greater and more perfect tabernacle,"

¹ Galatians iv. 3-5.

² Luke ii. 25-30, 36-38.

not "by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood." Two things are here contrasted, The "greater and more perfect tabernacle" is contrasted with the tabernacle of Moses; "the blood of goats and calves" is contrasted with "his own blood." The tabernacle and the temple also were types of many things. Our Lord expressly calls his body "this temple;"¹ and St. Paul calls the bodies of believers "our earthly house of this tabernacle."² The "greater and more perfect tabernacle" of the words before us, might therefore signify the human body of Jesus Christ our Lord; and some persons understand it in this light. But an examination of the context shews plainly that this is not its meaning. St. Paul has just been speaking of the Jewish tabernacle as the type of God's dwelling-place above in which Christ officiates, and which he calls "the true tabernacle."³ It is of this true tabernacle then that he is speaking in the words before us, into which, as he goes on to declare, Christ has entered as the High-Priest of His people. And when he says, "through a greater and more perfect tabernacle," his meaning is the same as when he says in another place, "Seeing then that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed through the heavens."⁴ The Jewish High-Priest on the great day of atonement, passed through the outer court and through the holy place, bearing sacrificial blood into the holiest of all. This, I should say, was in St. Paul's mind when he wrote the words before us. He meant to tell the Hebrews that Jesus the Christian High-Priest had passed, in like manner, through these visible heavens and through the heavens beyond them, into what he elsewhere calls, "the third heaven,"⁵ the dwelling-place of the Divine Majesty. How beautiful is this image! It presents to us indeed "a greater and more perfect tabernacle," with its outer court, its holy place, and its presence-chamber the true holiest of all,—a tabernacle not, like that of Moses, made with hands, but the work of Almighty God. The blood of goats and calves would dishonour that place of purest holiness; Jesus

¹ John ii. 19—21.² II Corinthians v. 1.³ Hebrews viii. 2.⁴ Hebrews ix. 14.⁵ II Corinthians xii. 2.

has passed into it "with his own blood." In these words St. Paul asserts what his language in this epistle hitherto has only implied. He has told us in the fifth chapter that every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, and that Christ is a High-Priest. He has repeated this statement in the eighth chapter, and proved by it that, as a matter of necessity, Christ must have somewhat to offer. And now he tells us that this somewhat is "his own blood;" that he is at once priest and sacrifice. The effects which follow this presenting of Christ's blood on high are next declared; he has obtained by it, says the Apostle, for us who trust in him, the blessing of "eternal redemption." Eternal redemption is the everlasting remission of sin. And this blessing, as we have already learnt, infallibly secures to all who partake of it, the blessing of sanctifying grace. St. Paul therefore in this place is only declaring more distinctly what he has set forth twice already. He has told us in the fifth chapter that Christ, as God's called High-Priest, is the author of eternal salvation "to all them that obey him." And he has told us in the eighth, that Christ's ministry in the heavens is the pledge and guarantee to his people of the promises of the new covenant; that sin shall be no more remembered, and that God's law shall be written in their hearts. Let us also observe, that in each of these three scriptures, whether it is called salvation or the forgetting of sin, or redemption, God's mercy is declared to be eternal. Those who are forgiven by him are forgiven for ever, and shall be sanctified because they are forgiven; "the Strength of Israel is not a man that he should repent." The expression in the text, "entered in once into the holy place," marks this more strongly than either of the preceding scriptures. The legal high-priest, who entered into the holiest on the great day of atonement to present sacrificial blood on behalf of the congregation, was obliged to come forth again, yea to be continually going out and in, because fresh ceremonial guilt on the part of Israel was continually exhausting the efficacy of his sacrifices, and demanding fresh atonements on the brazen altar of burnt-offering. With

Christ however it is far otherwise. When he offered his perfect sacrifice on Calvary, he looked back with the eye of Omniscience to the beginning of time and forward to the end of it, and made provision in that one sacrifice, for the forgiveness of all sin. And having done this, he entered in once for all into the holiest above, to present that sacrifice to God. I say once for all, for no fresh atonement is required: it is impossible that to the end of time any sin can be committed from which his blood is not able to cleanse. And we his believing people who have fled for refuge to the hope which in him is set before us, are therefore called to abide in confidence of this forgiveness, till he who has thus gone in to God, come forth again to bless us. For he shall yet come forth without a sin-offering, for the destruction of his enemies and the salvation of his friends.¹

That the same Saviour should be at once priest and victim, was a strange doctrine to Hebrew ears. Under the law of Moses these things had been most carefully distinguished; a senseless animal had been the victim, an intelligent man the priest. But even on this point, that law which the Hebrews revered did not leave them without light. Of all the typical ordinances of the Mosaic economy there was none more remarkable than that relating to the man-slayer. If an Israelite had killed his neighbour by accident, the nearest relative of the slain had the legal right of killing the slayer in return. But cities of refuge were appointed, and the man-slayer was directed to flee to one of them, and to "abide in it unto the death of the high-priest, who was anointed with the holy oil." If during the life of the high-priest he ventured to cross the border of his sanctuary, the legal right of the nearest relative of the slain remained in full force against him. But the death of that minister cancelled his offence; he might then return in peace "into the land of his possession."² I believe that St. Paul, when he wrote the words of the text, had this ordinance of Moses in his eye. For his language in the immediately-succeeding context, "that by means of death they which are called

¹ Hebrews ix. 28.² Numbers xxxv. 22—28.

might receive the promise of eternal inheritance," has a most singular resemblance to that of the Mosaic enactment. The Hebrews were of course well aware of this enactment. They could not therefore, without rejecting the light of their own law, regard it as a new doctrine, that by the death of a high-priest guilt was to be cancelled, and the guilty restored to favour. Even unbelieving Hebrews felt this to be the case. Philo the Jew, a leading adversary of Christianity and contemporary with St. Paul, acknowledges in a discourse concerning the cities of refuge, that the enactment of Moses with regard to them was typical, and that the Logos or Word was the great High-Priest who was ultimately signified. But he stumbles at the same time with all his nation at the doctrine of a crucified Redeemer, and therefore adds "this article concerning the death of the high-priest afforded me much difficulty and trouble." It affords, blessed be God, neither difficulty nor trouble to us; it is one of the clearest foreshewings of the Lord Jesus to be met with in the old economy. But how much better is the gospel than the law! The death of the legal high-priest cancelled only unintentional offences; the death of the Christian High-Priest cancels intentional offences of the deepest dye. We must consider too that the high-priest of that day might have been the early preceptor and bosom-counsellor of some unfortunate and exiled Israelite. His death restored indeed the exile to his possessions, but he returned disconsolate, for he had lost his friend. With us however it is very different. We have the benefit of our High-Priest's death, and yet he is alive. The words of the text, "by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place," point out most beautifully this union of death and life; his death on Calvary to set us free, his life in the highest heavens to secure us in the possession of that freedom. His ministry of intercession for this blessed end has been already explained at large, and needs no further elucidation at present. Let me however say one thing more concerning it, before I dismiss the subject. St. Paul tells the Corinthians that he was "caught up to the third heaven," and that he heard there

"unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."¹ They were "unspeakable," i.e. human language was not able to convey their import. Neither was it "lawful" to convey it, they were too sacred to be reported on earth. May we venture to inquire into this mystery? These unspeakable words could not be the songs of saints and angels, for it is both possible and lawful to render them into human language, as the book of Revelation proves to us. The only scripture which is parallel to that which I have cited, occurs in the Epistle to the Romans: let St. Paul therefore explain himself. "We know not," he says, "what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." But though human language cannot bear the burden of these groanings, they are intelligible to Jesus who presents them to God above. For St. Paul proceeds, "and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."² Comparing these scriptures together, and considering also that the "unspeakable words" to which St. Paul refers, were uttered in "the third heaven"—an expression in the mouth of a Jew precisely equivalent to the holiest of all, the place of priestly intercession, I am strongly inclined to believe that what he heard was THE CONVERSE OF DEITY, THE INTERCESSION OF THE SAVIOUR FOR HIS CHURCH. And it does indeed impart a character of blessed reality to the truth set forth in the text, that mortal eye beheld his glory in that place of purity; it does indeed refresh the heart with a livelier assurance of his loving remembrance, that mortal ear was privileged to listen to his gracious pleading on our behalf.

We have *third* the perfect character of this new covenant of peace.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

¹ II Corinthians xii. 4.

² Romans viii. 26, 27.

Let us observe the connection of these verses with the preceding, as indicated by the word "for." The Apostle has just declared that Christ by his entrance into the holiest above, has obtained for his people "eternal redemption," i.e. eternal deliverance from the guilt of sin, and by consequence, as we have already seen, from its moral power. It is indeed so, he continues, for if ceremonial ordinances have power to cleanse the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ impart to the conscience the assurance of God's pardon, and minister grace whereby we may do his will. This reasoning is from the type to the antitype: let us therefore consider the one that we may understand the other. The Hebrews are reminded that the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh. I have already explained many times that the blood of bulls and goats sanctified by removing ceremonial guilt; let me now explain the ordinance of the ashes of the heifer. A red heifer without spot or blemish was brought to the priest and sacrificed. Her body was then wholly burnt, and her ashes were preserved as a purification for sin. The manner of this purification was remarkable. "Running," or rather as the original signifies, "living water" was mingled with these ashes in a vessel, and was sprinkled on the unclean person. He might then approach the sanctuary of the Lord, as clean; but if he neglected this appointed means of cleansing, he was guilty of defiling that sanctuary, and was adjudged to death.¹ Let us now observe the spiritual meaning of all this. The blood of bulls and goats which removed ceremonial guilt, was a type of the blood of Christ which has obtained for us the remission of sin. And the living water which was sprinkled on the unclean person, was as evidently a type of the blessed Spirit of God. But that living water was mingled with the ashes of a sacrifice; typical doubtless of that blessed Spirit cleansing us in heart and conscience by shedding abroad in them the love and mercy of God revealed in the great sacrifice. For as sacrificial ashes with living water purified the unclean flesh,

¹ Numbers xix.

we obtain through the sacrifice and Spirit of Christ, at once peace of conscience and ability to serve God. St. Paul, as we have said, reasons from these types to prove to the Hebrews the perfection of the antitype. You are aware, my brethren, he would say, that when the blood of a bull or of a goat is presented for you in the holiest, it removes ceremonial guilt. And if even that worthless blood is known to possess such efficacy, surely your knowledge that the blood of Christ, God's spotless sacrifice, is now presented for you above, ought to minister to you peace of conscience, ought to give all the assurance which you can ask, that sin is indeed forgiven and that the living God is your Father. This blessed assurance, he continues, ought to alter the whole character of your obedience. Instead of being the spiritless and dead obedience of slaves, it ought to be the spontaneous expression of joy and gratitude, it ought to be that cheerful service which is rendered to a father by the children of his love. God will not accept indeed of any other service, for he is "the living God." Moreover Christ is your example in rendering it; Christ who from the manger to the tomb presented himself to God a spotless offering in thought, word, and deed; Christ who was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,"¹ that the world might know that he loved the Father, and that as the Father gave him commandment, even so he did.² And he who has left to you this example, has left to you also that you may follow it, the promise of his own strength. It was "through the eternal Spirit" that he offered himself to God. For he informed our humanity with the Holy Ghost, and man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, was found for the first time since the fall, the servant of him from whom he had departed, without blemish and without rebuke. And having now gone up on high, he has received of the Father for our sakes, according to the provisions of the new covenant, "the promise of the Holy Ghost." If we suffer him therefore to come and make his abode with us,³ He will shed abroad in our hearts by that blessed Spirit, the Divine love and mercy

¹ Philip. ii. 8.² John xiv. 31.³ John xiv. 23.

revealed in his precious sacrifice, will kindle in us the sacred fire of love, will raise our affections heavenward, and will thus cleanse us both in heart and conscience, that "we may serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."¹ The man who was ceremonially unclean, required only the living water mixed with the heifer's ashes; cleansed thereby he might approach the sanctuary of God. Surely then, my brethren, the Apostle adds, you require nothing more for real cleansing than what these ordinances of the new covenant provide; if you have peace of conscience and are delivered in heart from the moral power of sin, you are surely in a condition to serve God and to be accepted in your service. The legal high-priest cannot minister to you either of these blessings; the fleshly cleansing which the legal ordinances impart is but a shadow. A shadow however indicates a substance. And the ability of the legal high-priest to minister the shadow, proves, concludes the Apostle, the very truth which I have now declared; proves that what is ministered by Christ his antitype, is indeed the perfect substance.

Having thus endeavoured to elucidate the argument of the text, let me conclude this subject with two deeply solemn and important lessons which may be learnt from it.

We learn from this subject in the first place, that God has indeed provided in Christ all that is necessary for our salvation. Jesus said when speaking of the gospel, "all things are ready."² And I know no part of Scripture which is a more striking commentary on his words, than that which we have just been considering. Do we long to know that God is at peace with us, that we may have boldness to approach him? The Israelite who was ceremonially unclean, inquired with anxiety whether the cleansing sacrifice had been presented, and on being answered in the affirmative his anxiety was removed, he approached without dread the terrible sanctuary of the Lord. We are in like manner, assured in the text that Jesus having offered himself to God a spotless sacrifice for our sins, has gone into

¹ Luke i. 74, 75.

² Matthew xxii. 4.

the holiest to present his blood on our behalf. And we need nothing else to give us peace of conscience. Let us put our trust in that blood, and our "eternal redemption" is secured. Again, we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness: do we desire to serve and glorify him who has forgiven us, do we long to be delivered from the burden of an unclean heart? The Israelite whose flesh was defiled, was sprinkled with living water mixed with sacrificial ashes, and was clean. And we have the reality of which this was a shadow. For he who died for us and left behind him for our imitation the example of a holy and righteous life, has gone up on high, and is filled with the Holy Ghost. And if we receive him as our Saviour, nothing can hinder the fulfilment of the promise, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: ...a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: ...and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."¹ All things pertaining to salvation are therefore indeed "ready;" nothing hinders, nothing can hinder, but our unwillingness to be saved.

We are instructed by this subject in the second place, in the nature of salvation. Some persons suppose salvation to be deliverance from future punishment; others suppose it to be the reward which is laid up in the next world for those who serve God in this. And looking at it in either of these aspects, no one is unwilling to be saved. But let us turn to the text that we may learn what salvation is. When ceremonial defilement was cleansed by blood, when the unclean flesh was purified by living water, the Israelite was permitted to wait on God in his sanctuary. And the glad tidings of the gospel are that since Christ has died and risen again, "the living God" permits us to wait on him and serve him. This blessed privilege is the very essence of salvation. We may not so dishonour God as to make his service a means to an end, and that end, our happiness hereafter. His blessed service is itself the end, the end for which Jesus lived and died, the end for which we must live. But let us not sup-

¹ Ezekiel xxxvi. 25—27.

pose that our happiness is overlooked. Jesus found his happiness in serving; "my meat," he said, "is to do the will of him that sent me."¹ And we must be of the same mind, accounting with the holy Psalmist that "in keeping" God's commandments "there is great reward."² So shall our experience on earth be a foretaste of the joy of heaven. For the joy of heaven is the joy of serving God; "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him."³ Ah *this—this* is the cause why men are unwilling to be saved. The prospect of escape from punishment and of reward and happiness hereafter seems desirable to all, but the privilege of serving God now, and the prospect of serving him for ever, has charms only for those "whose hearts God has touched." May we be found among that blessed number!

¹ John iv. 34.² Psalm xix. 11.³ Revelation xxii. 3.

END OF VOL. I

APPENDIX.

VOL. I.

Note A.—Page 13.

I am anxious to prove the correctness of the interpretation of the words "when he had by Himself purged our sins," given in this lecture. Because the right understanding of this phrase and its cognates "to put away sin," "to take away sin," &c., is the key to the whole epistle. When St. Paul here says "our sins," is he speaking of believers or of men? And is the purgation of which he speaks, a definitive deliverance from condemnation, or simply the middle wall of partition between God and man thrown down? I am satisfied, as I have stated in the lecture, that the latter is the meaning which St. Paul intends to convey. For let us observe how he reasons on his words. Having declared in the opening of the epistle, that God is speaking to us through him who has purged our sins and ascended on high, he asks in the beginning of the second chapter, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The purgation of sin then to which he has just referred, is a blessing which may be neglected and which does not necessarily infer salvation. It cannot therefore be everlasting deliverance from condemnation; those who are partakers of that blessing shall never be suffered to neglect Christ on the one hand, and cannot possibly fall under his wrath on the other. It must be what is stated in the lecture, viz. Sin put away in Christ that we may come to God. This blessing may be neglected, and such neglect shall bring down at last a more aggravated doom. See the very same train of thought in Hebrews xii. 24, 25.

Note B.—Page 36.

The phrase "above thy fellows," which comes under consideration in this lecture, has occasioned more difficulty to my mind than any other expression in the epistle. Most expositors apply it to Christ's believing people. Professor Stuart applies it to the kings of the earth, of whom "the King of kings" is the acknowledged superior. But whilst both these things are true, and may be legitimately deduced from the apostle's words, they have no connection whatever, as must be manifest to every one, with the argument which he has in hand, viz. to prove to the Hebrews out of their own Scriptures, that Christ is superior both to prophets and angels. If the interpretation however which is given in the lecture be adopted, everything is harmonious and plain. The Hebrews revered prophets and angels as servants of the Most High; they

VOL. I. Y

were aware also that Messiah was the messenger of Jehovah. And I prove to you, says the Apostle, out of your own Scriptures, that though they are his "fellows" inasmuch as they have served along with him, he takes precedence of them all.

Note C.—Page 94.

This note is subjoined to prevent misunderstanding. Some readers, from the statement in p. 88 of this lecture, may suppose me to mean that miraculous gifts were an attestation from God to the *real, living Christianity* of those who received them. I should be sorry indeed to be so interpreted; the sentiment would be in direct contradiction to Matthew vii. 22, 23. Besides, it is not the way of the Lord to give to his people an *external* assurance of their gracious state; such a thing might be a temptation to forget the daily necessity of looking for his mercy unto eternal life. But it is perfectly consistent with all this, to say that by pouring down miraculous gifts on *the Church*, God testified openly before an unbelieving world, to her high standing and glorious dignity. Hypocrites might indeed receive these gifts; but it was through connection with that body to which it was God's purpose to bear testimony.

Note D.—Page 307.

There is one subject under consideration in this lecture, which has given more trouble to Commentators than perhaps any other in the New Testament. Some interpretation must be given to the words "to Him that was able to save Him from death;" and they give the best interpretation they can, glad to dismiss the passage as one of "acknowledged difficulty." To my mind it certainly does not appear in this light. And having given an interpretation which not only removes every difficulty but presents us instead with a fulness of instruction and consolation, I am anxious to state at length the reasons which have satisfied my own mind that the reader may be satisfied also.

Let us begin with the meaning of words. It will not, I suppose, be denied that the natural meaning of the Greek proposition *ex* is rather *out of* than *from*. "To save Him from death," is of ambiguous signification, but almost all Commentators make these words signify *to save Him FROM DYING*. And this certainly seems to me to give to the preposition a strained and unnatural meaning. The late Professor Stuart felt this so strongly that he represented the expression as a periphrasis for "the Sovereign Lord of life and death," making it express not the object for which the Redeemer prayed but the Person to whom His prayer was offered. But why should this be resorted to, if the preposition in its natural sense, gives an intelligible and instructive meaning? And this, I will now attempt to shew, it actually does.

"These are the words" said our Lord to His Apostles "which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets *and in the Psalms* concerning me." And having spoken thus, He "opened their

understandings that they might understand the Scriptures." (Luke xxiv. 44, 45.) St. Paul was not present indeed on that memorable occasion, but he was privileged afterwards with the same celestial teaching. It enabled him to discern the Lord Jesus in the sacrifices of Moses, in the smitten one of the prophets, in the broken-hearted suppliant of the Psalms. He found him in these Psalms, we cannot doubt, as his brother apostle had done, (Acts ii. 25,) setting the Lord always before Him, and as wave after wave broke over Him, and billow after billow threatened to engulf Him, rising still superior to grief and peril and temptation by the power of perfect faith. And if the Holy One of God was thus exercised with reference to minor trials and minor deliverances, it surely requires no proof that He must have been specially thus exercised as He looked forward to His MASTER-TRIAL and anticipated His MASTER-DELIVERANCE. He was to pass under the power of death, and to be laid a dead man in the grave; He was to come forth from that grave by the glorious power of the Father, bursting death's bonds for ever. And we have only to turn to the Psalm from which St. Peter quotes, to find that He was thus exercised. What else can we gather from the language, "My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life"? (Psalm xvi. 9—11.) The sixth, thirtieth, and eighty-eighth Psalms which also contain the Redeemer's own words, are referred to in the lecture, in further proof of this. And their testimony is most emphatically confirmed by the twentieth and twenty-first. In the former, the Church prays for her suffering Lord, "Jehovah hear thee in the day of trouble;" in the latter, she declares to that Jehovah concerning Him, "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it Him, even length of days for ever and ever." And these are by no means all the Psalms which might be cited. Let the reader consult for himself Psalm ix. 9—14; xviii. 1—6; xxii; xxxv; lv; lxix; cix. Now St. Paul's object is to shew that the Lord Jesus is qualified to be a High-Priest for men, because He has proved to the uttermost, human temptations and trials. He therefore selects the deepest of these trials, and reverently presents the exercises in prospect of it, of His holy and spotless soul. Can anything be even imagined more natural, more consoling, or more exquisitely apposite to the purpose in hand?

Two circumstances have rendered this Scripture difficult of interpretation. The first is that Commentators with one consent, have referred it to the prayers of Gethsemane. Ebrard says "the reference to Gethsemane is unmistakable." And he adds "so Theodoret, Calvin, Bengel, Carpzov, Paulus, Tholuck, Bleek, and the most of Commentators." Barnes and Stuart adopt the same view. This is the more remarkable in Professor Stuart, for he explains "the days of His flesh" to mean "the days of His incarnation, His mortal condition or state." And this might have shewn him that the Apostle had not any special prayer of the Redeemer in his eye, but His habitual and continual supplications. But what completely demonstrates to my mind that St. Paul in this place is not referring to

Gethsemane, is that such an interpretation *violates the unity of the epistle*. Though not written for unbelieving Hebrews, this epistle is armed at all points against every possible cavil; every position taken up in it being proved from Old Testament Scripture. It is not possible therefore that to prove Christ to be a thoroughly qualified High-Priest, the writer should have referred to His agony in Gethsemane, a circumstance which rested solely on New Testament authority. An unbelieving Hebrew, or a Hebrew weak in the faith, would at once have questioned the position. But let us take the view presented in the lecture, and how differently the case stands! Be not revolted, the Apostle would say, at the deep humiliation of Jesus of Nazareth; it only qualified him to be a perfect High-Priest. Your own Scriptures tell you so. Your own Psalms present Messiah before you in the very depths of human weakness, offering prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. And you have only to compare these prophetic announcements with the human experience of the Lord Jesus, to be aware of their perfect harmony.

The other circumstance which has obscured this passage, is the unscriptural idea that Christ raised Himself from the dead. To it chiefly must be attributed what would be otherwise unaccountable, viz. that the genuine meaning of a text which expresses so plainly those prayers for the mercy of resurrection to which the twenty-first Psalm refers, has never yet been discerned. The error to which I have referred, is one of no common magnitude. If our Lord triumphed over the greatest of His trials, and delivered Himself out of the greatest of His extremities by His own Almighty power, this must necessarily have been the case with trials and temptations of a lesser and inferior order. And we are thus led directly to the view that Christ sustained Himself in His extremities,—a sentiment the mischievous character of which it is not possible to over-estimate; which destroys the whole force of the blessed Redeemer's example and robs His tempted people of the whole consolation of His trials. It is altogether beside the point to refer on this subject, to His "immanent and inherent power." To say that *that* was exerted in resurrection from the dead, is simply to deny humiliation. For humiliation essentially consisted in His emptying Himself; (Philippians ii. 7;) i.e. in His Almighty power being for a season *altogether unexerted*. And humiliation is only another name for incarnation. For what was incarnation but the Son of God humbling Himself into the human condition? "Being found in fashion as a man" He was compassed with human weakness, and capable of human suffering. How beautifully Barnes has written "The Redeemer prayed when he felt that he must die!" And as part of the same condition, He performed only human acts; i.e. acts competent to man; necessarily Divine indeed because they were His, but still *within the bounds of manhood*. This must never be forgotten; it alone makes His example a living reality, and renders it possible that "the life of Jesus should be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (II Corinthians iv. 11.) But *self-resurrection* is not a human act; it is an act with which man can have no fellowship, even in his highest exercise of faith in God. It could not then have been His; for He is our example in

His victory over death, as in His kindred triumphs over the world, the flesh, and the devil. We must overcome as He overcame in that strength of which faith lays hold, the strength of His Father and our Father, His God and our God. (John xx. 17.) This is no speculation of the intellect; all Christian experience testifies to its truth. In all things indeed the Saviour has the pre-eminence; we have no promise that our flesh shall not see corruption. But where can the dying believer find language more suited to his circumstances than that of His dying Lord! Blessed shall we be if in that hour of nature's extremity we are able to say with him "I shall not be moved...my flesh shall rest in hope; Thou wilt not leave my soul...Thou wilt shew me the path of life." Surely it is by enabling us to do so, that He fulfils our constant prayer "In the hour of death, good Lord deliver us."

I have entered thus fully into this subject from an overwhelming sense of its importance. And the reasons now submitted entirely satisfy me that the exposition of the passage given in the lecture, expresses the mind of God. I am not insensible to the weight of authority which is against me, and am very far indeed from seeking to disparage it. But when I find such an expositor as the late Professor Stuart confessing himself very doubtful of its true meaning, and adding that he will "most thankfully receive from any one, a more probable interpretation" than his own, I cannot but feel it a solemn duty to the Christian Church to rescue if possible, this glorious scripture from the cloud of mystery in which it has been hitherto enveloped.

Note E.—Page 321.

The doctrine of Baptism stated in pp. 313, 314 of this lecture, may be objected to as High-Church doctrine by one class of theologians, and as Low-Church doctrine by another. I only seek not to separate what God has joined together, viz., His Sacraments as the seals of His Gospel, and that faith unto salvation to which they are designed to lead us.

I would ask those who consider it High-Church doctrine, what they understand by baptism. If it does not assure the baptized person of the fatherly love of God, the remission of sin, the blessing of adoption, and the promise of the eternal inheritance, it ceases to be the seal of the Christian covenant. But we cannot be children of God, it is objected, both by baptism and by faith. This difficulty is easily explained. Faith *receives* the blessing which baptism *seals*, and unbelief *rejects* it; the blessing conferred merely, is not salvation to any man. A baptized person abiding in impenitence and unbelief, is the prodigal son of Luke xv; a prodigal, but yet a son. To refer that parable to backsliding believers, is, I am persuaded, quite unwarrantable. Scripture no where recognizes such backsliding in a believer as that which it describes. Besides, Christ spake it in explanation of his conduct when he was found fault with by the Scribes and Pharisees, for eating with "publicans and sinners." And he evidently therefore intended to teach that though these abandoned ones were lost in sin, they were dear to God as the children of his covenant.

I would remind those who revere the Church of England, that this is exactly the doctrine of her catechism. "I was made in my baptism," the child is instructed to say, "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven;" I also vowed "by my godfathers and godmothers," to "renounce the devil and all his works," to "believe all the articles of the Christian faith," and to "keep God's holy will and commandments." Nor is it peculiar to the Church of England; it is held by all the orthodox Churches in common. Let me refer as an example of the truth of this statement, to the catechism of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. "Baptism," the child is instructed to say, "doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, our partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's." The one catechism speaks of the membership of Christ, the other says that we are ingrafted into him; the one speaks of adoption and heirship of God, the other says that we partake of the benefits of the Christian covenant; the one speaks of our solemn obligation to keep God's commandments, the other says that we are engaged to be the Lord's. The doctrine of the two catechisms is thus identical, and is the very doctrine which I have endeavoured to lay down.

I would ask those on the other hand, who object to it as too low, whether they really believe that all baptized persons shall be saved? If not, at what point do they stop? It is impossible from the very nature of salvation, that intelligent beings can be made partakers of it without their hearty consent; and faith is that consent. Whilst therefore there is a sense in which we are children of God by baptism, there is also a higher sense in which we are so by faith. "Blessed for ever and ever be that mother's child whose faith hath made him the child of God," is the language of the illustrious Hooker; and surely no one will accuse him of holding low views of the sacraments. Infants indeed are saved without faith; but infants are not intelligent beings.

Note F.—Page 336.

After giving every possible consideration to the very difficult Scripture which forms the subject of this lecture, and weighing maturely all the objections which have been urged against my former interpretation, I have felt myself constrained to abide by it. The writer in the *Presbyterian Review*, in his notice of my work, adopts the Calvinistic view mentioned in p. 323, and gives us in detail, his reasons for believing that the Apostle is here referring to real Christians and not to professors. These reasons are that the whole epistle is addressed to real Christians, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling;" that it was no warning to real saints that professors might fall away; that professors could not in fact be said to fall away or to be renewed *again* to repentance, since they had never been in Christ and had never been brought to repentance; that such warnings to God's real people are of frequent use in Scripture, and that we have no Scriptural authority for saying that mere professors

falling from their profession cannot afterwards be saved. Are we to understand then from the addresses of the Apostolic epistles being to "saints," "elect," "faithful," "holy brethren," that the writers had an infallible assurance of the real, living saintship of those to whom they were writing? The whole internal evidence of the epistles is against this supposition. The Apostles employed these terms in the judgment of charity, for they knew their fellow-men simply as *professors*; (see pp. 163, 164; 189, 190;) God and He alone knew certainly "them that were His." There was therefore no inconsistency in telling those who were addressed as holy brethren, that the Apostle saw something which made him stand in doubt whether this character indeed belonged to them, and that if they made shipwreck of the faith of which they had known so much, and abandoned the standing which they seemed to have gained, it would be impossible to recover them. I say "impossible to recover them," not "impossible that they should be recovered." The former, not the latter, is the Apostle's distinct statement; and it softens considerably the force of the word *impossible*, presenting in fact the idea expressed in the lecture "I possess no means of renewing you," "I shall find it impossible to touch your hearts any more." The reason of this was obvious. After knowing the truth, they had rejected it; after proving the love of the Saviour, they had put it away. For truth not subduing the heart to its obedience, never fails to harden it against God.

What makes me still think that St. Paul in the Scripture before us, had this case in his eye, that the stationary condition of the Hebrews made him sometimes afraid that their hearts after all, were not gained for the Saviour, is the reason stated in the lecture. In the case put by the Apostle, there is a striking omission,—he does not speak of *love* as marking those who may fall away. And when he tells them in the immediately succeeding context, that he is persuaded better things concerning them, *love* is as emphatically mentioned as it has been formerly omitted. In the interpretation of a passage so difficult, confidence would be unbecoming; but I do think that this last consideration should be well weighed before the view which I have given is rejected.

Note G.—Page 364.

We have in this lecture another of the difficulties of the epistle. No one can compare Hebrews vi. 15—17, with Romans iv. 17—21, without being satisfied that St. Paul is referring to the same promise of God to Abraham, viz. that of a son in his old age, believed by the patriarch, and at last obtained through patient faith. But the words referred to in this epistle, were spoken, beyond all question, when Isaac the subject of the promise in question, was twenty-five years old. The reader has before him my explanation of this difficulty. And if it seem far-fetched and unnatural, I shall be most thankful to be furnished by any one, with a more probable solution.

Note H.—Page 426.

Let me invite the reader's especial attention to the words "seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,"

and to their exposition in pp. 412—414, of this lecture. The subject is referred to in the Introduction, but I would refer to it now more at large. We must either reject this epistle altogether, or admit as most certain truth that the tabernacle of Moses was expressly designed as "the example and shadow of heavenly things." The throne in that tabernacle was therefore a shadow or figure of the eternal throne above, the throne of "the true tabernacle." Now the throne in the tabernacle of Moses was reserved for Deity alone. We have only to collate the passages in which mention is made of Him "that dwelleth between the Cherubims" to be satisfied that in every instance in which it occurs, that expression is synonymous for the living God. "I will meet with thee" said God to Moses, "and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, *from between the two Cherubims.*" (Exodus xxv. 22.) And in conformity with this, we read that "when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation...he heard the voice of one speaking to him...*from between the two Cherubims;* and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying. (Numbers vii. 89; viii. 1.) We are told that in the days of Samuel, "the people sent from Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts, *which dwelleth between the Cherubims.*" (I Samuel iv. 4.) And again we are told that "David arose, and went with all the people...to bring the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts *that dwelleth between the Cherubims.*" (II Samuel vi. 2.) "The Lord reigneth," is the sublime announcement of the Psalmist; "let the people tremble: *He sitteth between the Cherubims;* let the earth be moved. (Psalms xlix. 1.) "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel," is therefore the prayer of the adoring Church; "*thou that sittest between the Cherubims, shine forth.*" (Psalms lxxx. 1.) That prayer was especially addressed to him in the day of Judah's extremity when Sennacherib came up against Jerusalem. "Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, *who dwellest between the Cherubims,* Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God." (II Kings xix. 15—16.) Now if the pattern-throne in the earthly tabernacle was thus the seat of the living God alone, so that in the darkest days of Israel's apostacy none dared to interfere with its inviolable sacredness, the same thing is evidently and *a fortiori* true of the real throne in "the true tabernacle;" it is emphatically the seat of God. But St. Paul declares expressly in the scripture of which this lecture is an exposition, that Jesus is now seated on that throne. He declares Him elsewhere (Hebrews xiii. 20,) to be the "great Shepherd of the sheep." So that according to the doctrine of this epistle, the language of the eightieth Psalm may be applied to him,—He is the Shepherd of Israel, sitting between the Cherubims! What need we then any further witness? If the epistle to the Hebrews be received in evidence, the question of Christ's eternal Godhead may be regarded as settled for ever.

The ambiguity of the language employed has prevented this argu-

ment from being felt in all its force. The phrase "the right hand of the throne" may mean a seat beside the throne, and this is the idea which it actually conveys to hasty and superficial readers. But parallel Scriptures demonstrate that this is not its meaning. "I am set down" (seated) says the Lord Jesus Himself, "with my Father on His throne." (Revelation iii. 21.) What St. Paul therefore means to tell us here, is that He is sitting on the throne itself, on the right hand of the Father. And whether such a statement does not agree with his words elsewhere that Jesus "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," (Philippians ii. 6,) and with the language of Zechariah "the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts," (xiii. 7,) let the reader judge.

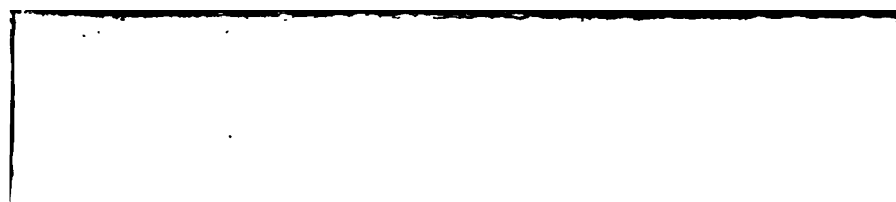
This subject leads me to notice a most insidious argument for one of the greatest abominations of Popery, the worship of the saints. "Worship" says Dr. Newman, (Theory of Developement, p. 404,) "is the necessary correlative of glory; in the same sense in which created natures can share in the Creator's incommunicable glory, do they also share in that worship which is His property alone." Now had this writer said that worship was the correlative of *Divine* glory, he would have spoken the truth. The glory which is attributed to Christ in this epistle, is Divine glory; He sits upon the throne and therefore claims the worship of God. Were His people now sitting on that throne, the same worship might be claimed for them; were they ever to sit upon it, the claim might be advanced from the moment of such exalted session. But Dr. Newman ought to know in the first place, that the glory (the ENTHRONIZATION, if he will) of the saints is not yet come, that it tarries for resurrection. The claim which he advances for them, is therefore, to say the least of it, premature.* And he ought to know in the second place, that the claim is impious. It is His present occupancy of the seat of God that declares Christ to be the Object of worship; to make the saints Objects of worship they must be exalted to the same seat. But this shall never be, even after resurrection. The Saviour himself shall yet resign this seat, exchanging the throne of God for "the throne of His father David," (Luke i. 32,) the throne of "the Son of Man." (Matthew xxv. 31.) For the express end and object of making His people partakers with Him, He shall thus consent to receive a *communicable glory*, being "subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (I Corinthians xv. 28.) It is upon that throne that the saints shall sit beside Him, according to His gracious word. He Himself shall receive worship eternally, for the seat from which He has descended has proved him already to be God's everlasting Son. But it is not necessarily the throne of worship: it is the throne of glorified manhood; manhood glorified in the person of, and along with the Lord Jesus.

* This fallacy pervades all Romish writers, though their arguments are not so insidious as those of Dr. Newman. They all speak of the saints as *now* reigning with Christ, and claim worship for them on that ground. The claim rests in this way on a statement as false as itself. There is none *now* reigning with Christ save the eternal Father alone.

The subject of the two thrones of Christ is thus equally instructive with that of the two altars of Moses. If the latter condemns the Popish Mass, by demonstrating that none may presume to cleanse themselves in the presence of God, (see Introduction to this work and to *The Serpent in the Wilderness*.) the former is equally condemnatory of the worship of the saints. CHRIST MUST STROOP TO A HUMAN THRONE BEFORE HE CAN SEAT HIS PEOPLE BESIDE HIM; THE DIVINE THRONE IMPLYING WORSHIP IS A HEIGHT UNAPPROACHABLE BY ANY CREATURE.

It is most instructive to compare the essay of the modern Divine with the epistle of the ancient Apostle. St. Paul declares that Christianity is *not* a system of Developement; that He who once spake "in divers portions," (πολυμερως) has now spoken once for all, by His Son. (i. 1, 2.) He declares that it is *not* a system of continued Priesthood; that the Son of God, "because He continueth ever, hath a priesthood which passeth not from hand to hand." (vii. 24.) He declares finally, that it is *not* a system of continued sacrifice; that "where remission is, there is no more offering for sin." (x. 18.) The modern Divine on the other hand, finds in Christianity all these three characteristics; he presents its developements, its priests, and its sacrifices. I admit that the developements are real, but they are those of the predicted mystery of iniquity which this gifted writer, alas, has mistaken for the mystery of godliness.







24



